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THE

Haunted Student.

ROMANCE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

HARRIETTE FANNING READ,

AUTHOR OF "MEDRA," AND OTHER TRAGEDIES.

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THE

HAUNTED STUDENT.

A WONDROUS old city is Nuremberg; and old and wondrous was it in the days when the Emperors held their court within its castle-walls, and when the Empress Cunigunda planted there the mighty linden which for so many centuries has spread its verdant honors unscathed by sunshine or by storm. Old and wondrous is that castle, stern upon its rocky base, defying alike the assaults of time, and the anxious curiosity of tourists.

Tradition says that "once upon a time" a mighty magician in a single night transported those antique towers and their ponderous pedestal from the banks of the Rhine to their present site; but when, or why, or by what fearful spells, none know. Vainly have antiquary and historian groped their bewildered way through musty parchments, and urged their weary feet from turret to donjon-keep, disturbing and destroying new "generations of vipers," in search of some worthless certainty concerning the old. No voice of the past renders up its secrets; no tell-tale echo from distant ages lingers around. "Once upon a time" is all we know. And what better data need we? Genius, power, and superstition, religion, love, and honor, have all in turn struggled, wrought, and conquered "once upon a time." The time has fled, but the deeds remain. The philosopher cares not when, but how,

they were achieved ; poet and lover need no spell but "once upon a time," to summon and array for battle, joust, and lady's bower, the brave and beautiful of ages past.

For that "once upon a time," then, let us thank the old magician. It becomes for us a spell potent as his own. As we breathe it, a new race of magicians arises amid the scenes of his power, new words of resistless might are uttered, new spells wrought, words framed by chiselled lips and silver voices, spells hidden amid golden curls or raven braid, charms impressed on the victim by the voiceless language of the eye and the twining of white arms amid the dance ; but, alas ! how oft it fared with these enchanters, as with many of old, that their *gramarye* took effect upon themselves ! that they were subdued by their own weapons, caught in their own snares, delivered up by the very demons in whom they had trusted !

Among those bright enchantresses who graced the court of the Emperor Charles IV., the brightest was the young Countess Ludmila, the most capricious, too, and the most bewildering, but only, as she said in self-defence, because she was the most sincere. And the defence was even more just than she herself fully understood it to be ; for so disingenuous, so selfish, is this working-day world, so full of petty manœuvres to accomplish ends as petty, that the most honest character is to that world's votaries the most incomprehensible. Sincerity is so utterly a stranger to their own hearts and brains that they as little recognise her when she appears, as did the patriarchs of old the angels whom they entertained.

And so poor Ludmila was capricious, romantic, odd, independent,—the last as fearful a heresy in the fourteenth century as in the nineteenth, when indulged by a woman ; and all because she loved truth and had the courage to utter it. The world has changed but little since then : the plausible, the pretentious, the time-serving, the interested, are still



believed and lauded; the truth-loving, the sincere, the unpretending, are doubted or misunderstood. But Ludmila was an heiress,—an Imperial pet, too: so she stepped unscathed along her path of roses, her foot bounding to the beating of her heart too lightly to discover the thorns beneath.

The Countess Ludmila was the only child and heiress of Count Otto the Stormy, (an ominous *sobriquet*, and well deserved,) a Franconian noble, who, having taken his due share in the turmoils and license of his age, and the spoils thereof, found at the age of fifty that he had enjoyed all the excitements of strife public and private, and began to think seriously of the future fate of his ancestral towers, broad lands, feudal retainers, and the well-earned terrors of his name. He had not reflected upon these points, until want of occupation, seconded by the soft eyes of a fair Bohemian of pure Czechen blood, whom he had encountered in a casual visit to a brother-in-arms upon the confines of the Böhmer Wald, suddenly suggested them. The count was still a handsome man, with that frankness and simplicity of speech and bearing which win their way to the heart of a true woman sooner and surer than all the conventional graces of all the courts of Christendom; and the "Stormy" knight returned to his stronghold, happier, beyond expression, than from the most successful foray he had ever made. As the lovely Bohemian brought no dowry beyond the rich and becoming ornaments formed from the jewels of her native mines, more youthful lovers hinted that the bride balanced the bridegroom's gold against his age, and disappointed fair ones, with commendable piety, crossed themselves, and feared that the jewels were the gift of the unholy elves of the Erzgebirge and would vanish before a drop of holy water. To the first the stalwart knight replied, with a significant smile, that, as he had neither wasted his patrimony by riotous living nor neglected to *improve it* through sloth and cowardice, he could

afford to take a dowerless wife; to the second he was reported to have declared that, if the jewels should be reclaimed by supernatural donors, Liska's grace of mind and person was too pure to lose any charm by the absence of ornament; and altogether he showed himself so indomitable in his contentment that malice was fairly at its wits' ends. The assailants were not skilful tacticians, or they would have discovered in the knight's very change of temper the vantage-ground of attack upon the lady's orthodoxy; for what art short of magic could have converted the count's characteristic appellation into a misnomer? He could live through a day without the pleasures of the chase, and through a month without a fray, unless it were forced upon him: his lance and his vassals' heads became almost strangers, for they soon learned where to bend a pleading glance when danger threatened. What but magic could make Liska's song sweeter to the strong, impetuous warrior than the blast of trumpet or the bay of hound? what else, on his return from the hunt, make him forget the wonted caress to the stanchest dog and trustiest steed, in his haste to fold to his heart the graceful form that was ever leaning over the battlements to watch for his approach? what else make the wavy play of her soft tresses fairer in his eyes than the play of his knightly banner as he came victorious from the field of fame? what else than magic cause the love-light of her eyes to thrill his inmost soul as never did the flash of spear and shield? The magic of Heaven's best gifts,—the full and rich outpouring of a true and trusting heart,—these were the fair Bohemian's spells of power. Even when a girl was placed in the count's arms instead of the inheritor of his knightly spurs whom he had hoped to greet, no cloud was seen upon his generous brow. "His girl would be worth all their boys" was his reply to the condolence of certain friends; and truly nature seemed to favor his assertion. Scarce could the infant Ludmila lisp, ere he snatched her from the

nurse's arms, in the invigorating dawn and at the soft fading of the sun, to bear her, cradled on his breast, over hill and dale, upon a gentle horse, until vociferous enough became her mingled laugh and shriek when he presumed to ride off to boar-hunt or battle without her imperial self. How beautiful she was, with her tiny arms extended half petulantly, half pleadingly, her blue eyes sparkling through tears, her chestnut curls stirred by the wind from the ingenuous brow and soft cheek just flushed by the childish will in its first experience of opposition! When she became large enough to sit the almost elfin steed he had procured for her, how proud, how careful, was the father, as he walked by her side in those first essays at independence, and how soon she learned to follow him fleetly and fearlessly through forest and over mountain! How beautiful she grew in the free, poetic life of woods and wilds! The whisper of the winds to the sighing leaves became to her ear and heart the music of the woodland elves; the rush of the storm against the boughs of the giant oaks that had seen the mystic rites and heard the solemn chants of Druid priests, and witnessed the stern march of German tribes against the haughty legions of Rome, thrilled her brain like an epic of her nation's pride; as she bathed her fairy feet in the mountain-rivulet, its silvery murmur awoke in her heart that tender melancholy which is the sure precursor of the spiritual life of love towards heaven and earth, and of the confiding gentleness, the entire self-negation, the heroic truth, which

"Sacrifices all things
To bless the one it loves!"

Count Otto's singular honesty of purpose, his blind fidelity to the Emperor and the Church, his tried courage and skill as a soldier, and the influence of his wealth, placed him often in positions where truth and firmness were of more value than diplomatic tact or courtly intrigue. The obstinate heresies of

the Calixtines were troublesome; the tenets of the Waldenses, long since rooted in Bohemia, were spreading vigorously. It was necessary to probe these wounds in the side of the mother-church, to examine into their full danger. Emissaries were despatched to certain nobles of Bohemia to learn how far their vassals had been corrupted; and Count Otto, with a suitable train, departed to traverse the glooms and scale the native fortresses of the Böhmerwald, on an Imperial mission to Zahera, the lord of Rabenstein.

Zahera was an old brother-in-arms of the count: they had fought side by side through many a bloody field, shared the dangers and the spoils of many a hard-won victory. The frank, true-hearted knight felt all the friendly emotions of younger days stir in his breast as he wound his way to the dizzy height whereon was perched the tower of the "Raven's Nest." But on entering the court-yard he looked around him with a dismay almost ludicrous, so neglected, so desolate, so unknighly, was the aspect of the place. No groups of well trained men-at-arms, whiling away the hour with jest or song or oft-told tale as they burnished the trusty casque and corslet, met his eye; no clink of armorers' tools rang like music on his ear. Scarce a sign of life prevailed, save here and there a sentinel lounging against sally-port or parapet, with more the air of a swine-herd than a soldier.

Could this be the stronghold of Zahera, the haughty noble, the active knight, the rigorous disciplinarian? In the rude hall of the castle some twelve or fifteen besotted idlers, as slovenly and inert as if they had never seen the gleam of steel, or heard the sound of the trumpet, stared like domestic animals disturbed from their repose, and made a rude attempt to receive the new-comers with something like civility. Leaving his followers to make their way as best they might amid this unusual state of things, the count followed an old serving-man, up one of the narrow, crooked, and steep stairs of that age,

into an apartment where Zahera awaited him. Count Otto stood transfixed; for he saw that the fearful change upon his former comrade's face was not the work of time. With untrimmed hair and beard, haggard visage, his once powerful and stately form thin and bent, Zahera fastened his hollow eyes upon the count with a gaze more of surprise than welcome. Not too penetrating, and quite melted by this woeful apparition, the latter stepped frankly forward and met the lord of Rabenstein with a brotherly embrace. All the pleasure which Zahera seemed capable of feeling beamed upon his face at the count's hearty kindness.

"And how," said Otto, "could I have dreamed of finding thee thus,—thee whom I knew for twenty years, when thou couldst fight longest, drink deepest, and sleep soundest of all our band?"

"Perhaps I can do so still," returned Zahera, with a sickly effort at unconcern.

"Thy looks belie thee, then. But come, come; I understand all this. Thou art too secure here in thy 'nest:' thou hast grown sluggish: thy blood stagnates, thy brain grows mouldy. We must have a war-blast blown in thine ears that will make thy heart leap as in the olden time. Why, the very thought of it improves thee. And that brings me to business."

"Then business, and not friendship, sends you here?" said the lord of the castle, with some return of his former gloom.

"Not a bit of it; for it was because of our known friendship that the business was intrusted to me."

Over brimming goblets of wine and well-dressed game of the mountains, the count's errand was unfolded. The lord of Rabenstein listened with evident interest,—sometimes with excitement. He pondered long and deeply, but avoided any distinct reply; nor could Count Otto's most direct questions elicit any *thing which tended to the success of his mission.*

They talked finally of old times, old friends, old adventures, and themes of more importance seemed to be quite forgotten. But after they had parted for the night Zahera's temporary exhilaration died away. He walked forth upon the battlements and stood gazing on the vale below, where the river sparkled beneath the moon's rays, and the scenery of rock, grove, and meadow showed in mystic beauty through a veil of silver light. Calm and elevating as was the view, the longer its master contemplated it the more wretched he became, until his agitation grew piteous and even fearful.

"Strange weakness, strange inconsistency, of man!" he exclaimed, half aloud. "Of all things I have most desired to sever this monk from my son; and now the occasion comes and I shrink from it. I, who could brave the incarnate fiend, dare not oppose my own child. What would it avail me? I feel sure that Cyrillus favors these heresies: he is too strong to deny them if questioned; yet I *dare* not permit it. If I destroy him, or even remove him, I remove Albert still farther from me. O God! thou art indeed the Avenger!"

The next morning the lord of Rabenstein relaxed from his caution so far as to promise that he would watch over the religious inclinations of his vassals and neighbors, and communicate with his friend should any necessity arise. The conversation then became more genial.

"See here," said Count Otto: "it is the life of my wife and child which keeps me young. With Liska folded against my heart, and my daughter on my knee, I feel doubly shielded against the darts of time. If you had a son, now——"

"I have," was answered, abruptly.

"You have, and did not tell me at once?"

"There is a selfishness in parading our own—happiness!"

There was a pause, and a bitter accent on the last word.

"A son? Why, Zahera, we must betroth him and my *Ludmila*: that is, if he's old enough."

"He is seventeen; but his mother, though my wife, was the daughter of one of my vassals, and——"

"Pshaw! your shield has quarterings enough. Let me see the boy. Is he what you were once?"

"God forbid!" was the energetic reply.

The count stared. "You were a true comrade, and a brave knight: what more would you have him?"

"Bold and true he is, but more like his mother than like me. However, you shall see." And, calling a retainer, he ordered him to summon Bercthold. A slender old man with the delicate features and flashing black eyes of the Czechen race, presented himself. Zahera addressed a few words to him in an under-tone, using the Bohemian dialect: the minstrel—for such was his vocation—then withdrew, and in a few moments they beheld him rapidly threading his way down the hill-side.

"Now we will follow," said the baron; but ere they had emerged from the postern Bercthold was lost to their view in the windings of the path.

"Your old servitor moves as surely and lightly as a boy," observed the count; "yet he must be ten years our elder."

"True; but his limbs have never been cramped and stiffened by the weight of armor. Give him a horse and a lance, and he is no despicable foe even now. Your German rough-riders are clowns to him."

As he spoke, the baron turned aside and, ascending a point of rock screened by lindens interwoven with parasitical plants, a glance of his eye, a slight motion of his hand, directed the count's attention to a scene which awakened all the latent poetry of the blunt old soldier's nature. Before him lay the meadow which he had seen from the castle-heights, spread with a velvet turf and enamelled with flowers of every soft and brilliant hue; here and there a thicket of young trees broke the monotony of the level surface; and on

the northwest he could trace the foamy path of the mountain-torrent, which, so noisy and fretful amidst the opposition of its rocky guardians, once freed from restraint, glided quietly and gayly on its way, a liquid cestus girding the fair vale.

These graces of landscape detained his eye but a few moments : his interest was centred in the animated nature which he beheld through his leafy screen. On the left hand stood a group composed of the old minstrel, a monk, as his dress indicated, and a lad, evidently the young heir of Rabenstein. The light in which the latter stood fully displayed his features and expression. The contour of his face was a pure oval, the mouth well cut and firm, the nose slightly aquiline, the eyes full and well set, but when they were cast down the conformation of the low, broad brow gave to the whole visage something of that gloomy cast which is seen in the Antinous. Better read in the physical than the intellectual demonstrations, the old knight, soon satisfied that the face was a handsome one, bent a critical glance upon the figure. The boy was tall of his years, too thin for youthful beauty ; but his breadth of chest, the firm and graceful carriage of his head and shoulders, and the perfect repose of his whole demeanor, won the count's heart.

"He shall have my Ludmila," he said, mentally. "What a soldier he'll make ! How I should like to see him move !"

The wish was granted soon as formed ; for a group suddenly emerged from the fringe of trees skirting the southern extremity of the meadow, which called the attention of the young baron and caused him to move forward some rods with a freedom of action that entirely secured the good opinion of his unseen observer, who was in the habit of judging animals, biped and quadruped, by very nearly the same rules. His eye followed that of the boy, and fell upon some eight or ten native Bohemians, leading a horse of rare beauty, evidently new to bondage. Sullenly and with hesitation he moved,

as if wearied with resistance, yet unconquered in spirit. The new-comers paused within a few paces of their young lord, and all but the immediate guardians fell back from the captive's side. He was about fifteen hands high, his coat jet black, save the star in his forehead, the head small and well set, the ears slender and now inclined towards the point where new danger seemed to threaten: the eyes were clear, bold, and not too prominent, and the arching neck combined equal power and beauty. Broad-chested and deep-shouldered, he stood with his forehead well up and his haunches under him, as if thoroughly decided and prepared for trying conclusions with any new aggressors. Count Otto had never seen a more perfect specimen of what, next to his own wife and child, he considered nature's most perfect work. Albert walked fearlessly, yet quietly and cautiously, to the side of the horse, which met his steady look with restless, dilated eyeball, and moved around his prize with the air of an old horseman. It was evident that he knew his worth. He paused again—this time more in advance—and again arrested the eye of the wondering animal. His own now first showed something of native fire: the Czechen spirit began to glow in its wild, piercing glance, and the horse's look gradually grew shy and wavering under it. Still firmly, though carefully, he placed his hand upon the animal's shoulder. One mad plunge followed the touch; but the steady, muscular arms of the peasants checked it, and the horse, shivering violently through every muscle, stood again controlled beneath the stern, concentrated gaze of the youthful tamer.

Low and caressingly the boy spoke in the musical Bohemian tongue, and the captive sprang to and fro at the sound as if a trumpet-blast had rung in his ear; but after a few repetitions he began to endure the pressure of the hand upon the neck and shoulders, and to listen, with glance less fiery, though still watchful, to the voice. At a sign, other of the Bohemians

approached and ranged themselves at his head, and Albert, wrapping the halter securely around his hand and wrist, placed himself opposite the horse's shoulder.

"Holy Mother!" exclaimed Count Otto: "surely the boy is not going to mount that imp of Satan!" It was with effort that he restrained himself when he saw the youth twist the horse's mane quickly and firmly around his left hand and with one bound seat himself firmly upon the wild steed's back. The peasants fell from each side, while, with mane bristling and eyes glaring with rage and terror, the untamed rover of the plains plunged furiously forward, and then as suddenly paused, with a shock that would have unseated many an iron-nerved *ritter*. Albert, however, maintained his equilibrium by inflections of his body and pressure of his limbs so just and so well timed, as to prove him no novice in his perilous position. Again and again the horse plunged madly, rose high in the air, and threw himself entirely upon his haunches, then swerved violently from side to side, in his convulsive efforts to free himself from his strange and fearful burden.

In vain, so steady was the rider's seat, so firm his grasp upon the halter, so pliant his wrist: his right hand maintained its gentle, resolute pressure upon the animal's neck. After some minutes' contest of this sort, the defendant in the fray paused an instant, as if to gather breath for new efforts; then, with one united leap, which threw his four quarters entirely from the ground, he flew, like arrow from the bow, straight towards the river's brink. A minute, and he had dashed down the gently-sloping bank: his head alone was visible as he breasted the wave. Steadily and vigorously he swam on: he gained the northern shore, and, throwing himself out with equal power and lightness, in a few moments disappeared in the forest beyond. For the first time Count Otto became conscious that the baron's hand enclosed his wrist with the *grasp of a vice*. The minutes rolled on into quarters of an

hour, the quarters into halves, and the halves became the whole, ere the boughs were again stirred, and the young lord of Rabenstein and his coal-black steed reappeared, again dared the current and swept on towards the spot whence they had started. The coat of the wild horse was glossy with the water which dripped from its heaving sides. His eyes had lost their baleful fire, his limbs their savage power: the intellectual had triumphed over the physical; mind had conquered matter. Obedient to the rider's touch and voice, he carcered twice around the meadow ere he was allowed to pause and the two attendants to take the halter as before. Their young lord sprang lightly to the ground. His lips and the healthy olive of his cheek were paler than when he started, and his dark, waving hair, damp with moisture, clung to his brow and temples. For a minute he leaned lightly on the old minstrel, who had hastened to receive him, and gave orders to the peasants. One hurried to the river's brink and brought water; another produced from his wallet a cake of the coarse black bread of the country. Albert held the water to the horse. At first he turned aside with some symptoms of his former fears; but the sight of the familiar element, and his imperative need of its refreshing aid, conquered his lingering dread. He drank eagerly the little that was granted, and, after a slight hesitation, ate from his conqueror's hand the hard and unaccustomed fare. The peasants meantime wiped away, with wisps of the soft grass, the mingled foam and water which hung upon his sides, breast, and limbs.

"Why, the boy's a wizard!" broke forth the "Stormy" knight. "I shall never again doubt any thing I may hear of the gifts of elves, gnomes, and cobbolds,—for they are supposed especially to favor you of Bohemia. A devil like that tamed in an hour! I could not have done it in a month with bit,

whip, and spur. That boy's pranks made my heart tumble over and over as if he had been my own."

"He is used to such pranks, as you call them. A strange gift of power he has over all things that come within his reach, man or beast. My vassals will follow me steadily to chase or battle: they but obey my orders; whereas his look rules them better than my blows, and they will peril their lives to gratify his boyish whims."

"He seems to hold his own lightly enough. I looked for nothing less than a broken neck when I saw him mount yonder mad animal. By the saints, I hardly knew which of the two to admire most: the boy's a hero, and the horse fit for the emperor. I can hardly credit my eyes that I have seen all this done. But how could you ever permit such risks?"

"*Permit!*" the baron repeated, in a low but bitter tone. "Pshaw! there's no great risk," he continued, carelessly: "you see he hath a gift of power over the steed which never fails."

"As handsome, too, as he is brave. How say you, old comrade? Shall he wed my girl?"

"I am poor, friend. I have not cared for wealth as I should have cared for his sake. These towers and an empty name,—little else will the lad receive from me."

"Ay, I know thee of old,—readier to give than take, careless who empties thy wine-flagons or thy purse. But there's good blood in the boy's veins; and who would compare its worth with gold? He shall have a dowry with my Ludmila worthy of his name."

"Thanks! thanks! There's one care the less."

"A bargain, then? And now I must talk to this stripling. How proud you must be of him!—how fond! Ah, I warrant he longs for the day when he may win his spurs at your side. Come, make me known to him. But not a word of our plans:

best that young folks should not anticipate their doom, good or evil. Come."

He laid his head upon his friend's arm as he spoke, and, to his surprise, felt it tremble violently beneath his grasp, while the baron's face grew pale as he urged him on.

"No! no!" the lord of Rabenstein gasped rather than spoke. "I am not well. I must return. See Albert, and then join me above."

The count stared, though with sympathy in his look.

"Ah, I saw well you were changed. Your hand shakes beneath mine like a frightened monk's. Lean on me. We will return together."

"Nonsense! A passing spasm only,—the twinge of an old wound. Go and see the boy. I am glad you like him. I will wait for you on the battlements."

He turned, and moved towards the castle. The count observed the effort which it cost him to preserve his firm and knightly step.

"It all comes of idleness," was his conclusion, after a moment's thought. "But what should the idleness come from?"

Count Otto here asked himself a question rather too profound. His friend had never received a wound to incapacitate him long from putting lance in rest; and physical wounds were the only ones of which the inquirer had any experience. So he dismissed the matter, and bent his steps down the short remainder of the descent into the meadow.

Berchthold immediately perceived and pointed him out to the heir of Rabenstein, who came forward instantly and welcomed him with a simple dignity beyond training, Nature's most gracious gift.

"Your pardon, young sir, for my intrusion," commenced the count; "but, truth to tell, I've been watching you for the last hour *behind those trees*," (pointing to the clump which

clothed the rocks upon his right hand,) "and now I want to hear you talk."

The boy laughed with all the joyousness of his age.

"What can I, who grew among these rocks like one of the plants which gather all their life and strength from them, say to a knight like Count Otto of Riesenbourg, who has seen all that camp and court can show?"

"You can tell me the art by which you conquered yonder denizen of the forest."

Albert looked into his questioner's eyes with a look and smile of surprise and interrogation. "Art!" he repeated.

"Surely. Is it not an art to subdue so suddenly and effectually, without violence, such a creature as that?"

The stripling shook his head. "Berethold taught me to ride, my lord," he answered; "but further I have nothing to tell. You, who have commanded men so long and ably, know that we all see in them what we like and what we dislike: the brute may have the faculty to discern his friend from his foe. He thus knows, perhaps, that I love him——"

"There's more in it than that, boy. I've conquered men and horses in my day, but it was with lance, cord, and spur,—with the strong hand."

"You may make slaves thus, sir, but not friends." And the youth's eyes flashed defiance, almost contempt. He loved freedom too well to wish its spirit banished even from a brute. He looked towards the Bohemians, and called, "Zdenko!" The foremost of the group approached. "Mount this horse, and stick to him as long as you can."

The man nodded, and, taking the halter from his master's grasp, sprang alertly upon the animal's back; he in turn bounded with all four feet from the turf, and went through a series of evolutions which would have been the delight of any master of equitation, had they been acquired under the sting *and pressure* of his own spur and bit, but, as a display of the

horse's own volition, caused Count Otto to withdraw a few steps from the vicinity of his heels.

In vain did the new rider ply the thong and strain at the halter: the steed again made for the river; and in a moment horse and rider were parted, and struggling furiously for pre-eminence amid the splashing water. The peasants hurried to the rescue, the victim's nose was brought somewhat more under the current than he found endurable, and he was restored to his more congenial element in durance vile.

"Release him," said Albert; and, as his order was obeyed, the horse shook the sparkling drops from his neck and sides, and then, with a low neigh, trotted towards his recognised friend.

"You see the difference," said the youth to Count Otto. "Zdenko has run some risk at my will; yet harsh word from me he never heard. The horse shakes off the rider with the 'strong hand,' and returns to me, who by mere strength could not restrain the toss of his neck."

"I would give much for such a steed as that for my girl. What price would induce your people to procure another of the race?"

"Since you value this one so much, count, permit him the honor of carrying your daughter. To a gentle rider I'll warrant him gentle as he is strong."

"No, young sir, I did not mean to be a beggar to your courtesy: he is too valuable to be thus lightly parted with."

"Do not refuse him, my lord, for my good friends here can readily replace him. He is yours most freely."

"Thanks, then. I shall not forget the kindness; and the day may come when I shall return it by a boon far richer, much as I prize this. And, now that your training seems ended, return with me to the castle. Your father left me but now, and ill."

The boy cast down his eyes with the strange and gloomy look which we first noticed.

"Pardon my discourtesy, sir, but Father Cyrillus," (turning to the monk,) "will tell you I have other tasks to do ere he releases me."

"Ah, you meddle with the monk's craft, then? I'd rather see you stick by spear and shield. 'Tis all well, I dare say: only 'tis not of the fashion of your father's days and mine. But I shall see you a doughty knight yet. So farewell till we meet again."

He pressed the boy's hand warmly, and took a long look into his frank yet thoughtful eyes.

"Yes," he repeated, mentally, "he shall have my Ludmila." And he turned to ascend the heights. Albert gave a word and a caress to the coal-black steed, and placed the halter in Zdenko's hand, who followed Count Otto from the meadow.

The boy gazed a moment after the horse, and something like regret shadowed his face.

"You have done right, my son," said the monk, after scrutinizing his pupil's manner for an instant. "You would not recall your gift?"

"I was thinking, father, of his future lot: he is so proud, so beautiful. It is hard, even for a brute, to be reduced from the glory of freedom and its happiness to the slavery of living beneath another's will. And if the count's daughter should not care for him as I would——"

"Do not imagine that she will. The weak are always the tyrannical; nor can women understand the nobility of strength. No, no: he will be lashed by the rough-rider and kicked by the grooms, until he trembles when the bit enters his jaws, and becomes as docile through fear, as in your hands he would be from courage and affection."

As the monk spoke slowly, in a measured accent, as if every word had its mission, his look riveted upon Albert's counte-

nance, the boy's pale cheek flushed, and his eye kindled with something more than mere boyish irritation. He turned almost fiercely upon Father Cyrillus, and then again to the hill-side, up which his stately conquest was permitting himself to be led. The monk smiled beneath his cowl: he had not spoken without a purpose.

"Why does not God permit those things which he created free to remain free?"

"You ask of mysteries, Albert. Submission is the one great condition of man's existence. If he be truly one made in God's image, he submits only to that Maker, and requires submission only from the wicked and unwise; if he be weak, he submits to circumstances; if worldly, a lover of worldly power, he submits himself to that power; he becomes apprenticed to it, until he learns how to wield its tools, how to fashion its defences, until, a master-craftsman, he also rises from a slave to a tyrant. In which class would you enroll yourself?"

The boy cast his eyes to earth, and again the melancholy of his broad low brow took the expression of that statue which has become the recognised type of youthful male beauty, the Antinous. With all the simplicity of boyhood, there was nothing of boyhood's reckless trust in self.

"Father," he replied, after a long pause, "I do not always know what to think of myself; but sometimes I hope that I am one of those whom God has made in his own image. I think that I love freedom truly; for it grieves me to see any thing suffer its loss; but to want it myself would drive me mad."

"There is but one freedom," rejoined the monk,—“the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free. Were each thus enfranchised from himself, no man would be the slave of his brother. As it is——” He paused gloomily.

"As it is," Albert took up his words, "I want to know so

much, and I become confused and vexed that I can comprehend so little. Is it because I am so young?"

Father Cyrillus smiled sadly at his pupil's manner, earnest almost to anger. "When you are older, you may comprehend less, but you will trust more. Meantime, we waste the morning in words that can give us no light. Each must solve the problem of his own life by his own action. Never forget that out of the present we are to fashion the future. And, in good time, here comes your teacher."

Zdenko now sprang from the rock into the meadow, followed at a more dignified pace by an elderly man-at-arms, iron-clad from top to toe, buckler on wrist and spear in hand. They directed their steps towards their young lord,—the peasant with an elastic bound and swift motion that showed his woodland nurture, the soldier with the heavy, measured tread formed partly by discipline and partly by the weight of armor. He paused, but Zdenko hurried on towards a grove that fringed the banks of the stream, amid whose foliage a rustic lodge was just visible. Thence in a few moments he emerged, with two horses, one of which sprang forward to Albert's side: the rein of the other hung over the peasant's right arm, while across his left lay a bundle of light armor. Surrendering the steed to the man-at-arms, Zdenko proceeded to indue Albert with the flexible mail of Milan workmanship, gazing upon him as he adjusted it, and uttering exclamations of pleasure with the simplicity of a nurse over a spoiled darling. The horse—evidently a trained one—paused from the bounds he had been performing around his master with the caressing air of a petted dog, and the intelligent eye seemed almost asking him to mount.

Without touching the stirrup, the boy sprang from the ground into the saddle, lightly and gracefully as if he had but made a step in the dance. The soldier too threw himself across his horse with the skill of long habit and the strength

of a frame almost as iron as his harness; but he moved and sat like a machine, while the young lord, with the sunbeams gleaming over the scales of the armor which encased his slight elastic form, with his cheek spiritually pale, his eye full of the light of inward life, seemed like a knight of faery sent on some mystic errand to the sons of earth. Each then reined back his steed to the suitable position, and Albert lowered the point of his lance in salutation with the ease of an accomplished knight. The monk gave the signal, and the two rushed into the mimic fight which was to train the youth into the skill and hardihood of the real. Cautiously the old trooper restrained the motions of his heavy steed and the strength of his own powerful arm, as he encountered his antagonist; as skilfully did Albert evade, by his practised hand and the good training of his active horse, many a thrust of the blunted lance, and, sweeping on like an arrow, wheel, halt, and be ready for the next charge, while his rigid preceptor had scarce recovered from the shock of striking at nothing. At every new manœuvre, every successful stroke, the old minstrel uttered exclamations of delight, and the monk threw back his cowl, and began to warm by the excitement of the scene. There was little about his face, save the tonsure, to mark his religious calling: his age did not exceed forty; his eye was clear and penetrating, his lips pale and habitually compressed by the necessity of strong self-restraint. His expression was that of a man capable of strong concentration and great activity; but there was no resignation in the countenance, no repose. And now, as he stood intent upon the mimic fray, his pale cheek grew flushed, his lips parted, and his eye brightened, far beyond his usual caution. Evidently not the scene, so much as the associations it had aroused, and which he was permitting himself to indulge, was working within him. Suddenly a pallor almost livid spread over his face: he bit his nether lip, contracted his brow as if a sudden pang had shot through

him, and, turning away, walked towards the river, nor paused until he stood upon its brink.

"All this I have resigned," he uttered, passionately,—“activity, glory, the future. And for what? Revenge! Will it reward me? All that boy will be, I might have been; and I have sacrificed all to pursue that miserable man,—to reach the only vulnerable point in his heart. I succeed; but at what a cost! My poor Marila, you will be avenged.” He walked to and fro some moments with the step of a soldier.

"Sometimes," he resumed, "I ask myself if Marila would be content with my determinations for her son. But why not? I will not make of him a cloistered monk; he shall not pine away in the lone cell; I will not wrest from him the hope of ambition and the solace of friendship. The Church militant is open to him: there genius can find scope, there the ardor of the youthful heart relieve itself in manly deeds. But the name must die; the very stones which bear it must be razed. I have sworn it, by my hopes of the hereafter!"

Ab, what is there of the religious vow, the abandonment of evil passion, the search for the calm, the holy, the self-denying, in the rigid brow, the bright, stern glance, the low, fierce tone? Yet Father Cyrillus was self-denying: how much he had sacrificed, how much suffered, for her sake of whom he now thought aloud! To her memory he had yielded up his all of true existence. He erred; but it was the error of the age acting upon a warm, firm heart and a too vivid imagination.

Again he paced gloomily to and fro, pausing at intervals to watch his pupil's progress.

"Yes, yes: he will be happier so: Marila herself would own it." But his words came hesitatingly: he seemed rather like one striving to convince himself than uttering his own belief,—the results of his own experience. Composed, if not *satisfied*, he turned again towards the practising-ground, and

at his signal the tilting ceased. The trooper halted, and reined back his steed to statue-like immobility, while Albert, galloping on towards the monk, wheeled around him some half-dozen times in giddy circles, and then, springing suddenly to the ground, stood smiling with that expression of ingenuous youth, which, when conscious of desert, so frankly asks for approval.

"You improve, my son; but you have overtaken yourself whilst I was absorbed in thought. You must learn to keep within the limits of your strength."

While he spoke, Zdenko was removing the boy's armor. The soldier dismounted, and, turning loose his horse, which immediately joined his companion, walked away with the mechanical precision that seemed to direct his existence. Berethold and the peasant led the horses to the lodge, while Father Cyrillus, followed by Albert, directed his steps towards the rocks on the west side of the valley. Still keeping the stream upon the right hand, they entered the glen through which it dashed, and commenced its ascent. The slender arms of the birch hung caressingly over them, and the linden lent its silvery screen to the path; here and there a shaggy goat peeped knowingly over the rocks, and the small birds hopped fearlessly by the intruders, or almost brushed their faces with flitting wing as they wandered from bough to bough. The monk scattered crumbs to them as he walked along.

"Were such peace and security everywhere," he murmured.

"And why are they not?" asked his youthful companion.

"Youth asks of manhood questions which manhood scarce dares to contemplate," was the reply. "The mystery of evil is one of the first problems over which the thinker exhausts himself. Who shall solve it, save He who saw fit to create it? Enough for us that he has given us the power to detect, to meet, and to quell it in our own hearts. Let us but struggle

fairly with it there, and we need never fear it elsewhere, however we may suffer from it."

He spoke sincerely, all unconscious of the very dragon of evil which he was pampering in his own breast and encouraging in his pupil's: he felt that retribution was due, and imagined that he had a right to appoint himself the agent of the Almighty to effect it.

Turning now to the left, a winding path brought them in front of a wall of rock which towered on the right hand. A natural entrance had been widened by the hand of art into a space sufficiently high and broad to admit the sunbeams and fresh air within the yawning depths of the cavern. On one side of this majestic portal rose a stately pine, whose reddish-brown bole and dark-green foliage stood forth in beautiful relief from the gray and frowning cliffs: from beneath a shelf of rock at its foot, a spring of limpid waters welled forth into a natural basin, whence it parted slowly to disappear amid the soft and verdant moss that carpeted the spot. Albert paused to bathe his face and throat in the friendly fount.

"Now I am ready, father," he said; "and you shall see that I am not so weary as to be stupid."

The monk led the way into one of those caverned halls so common in the mountains of the Böhmerwald. It was plainly the abode of an anchorite. Heath strewn upon the hard floor formed the couches; a rude table, the work of peasant hands, held books and writing-apparatus; and a coarse bench was the only seat. Dry enough was the intellectual food provided for the young enthusiast,—the wild and wearying metaphysical propositions of the schools, the tangled disputations of the prosiest fathers of the Church, the histories of certain martyrs of the most miraculous class; but no poetry, —nothing which could betray or encourage the student into the dream-land where the child of genius is so prone to wander, muse, and forget the necessity of action. One or two works of

true philosophy and elementary science, and a volume of Cicero, relieved the tedious mass. The latter the young lord snatched with avidity, and opened it at the oration for the poet Archias. Ah, vengeful and subtle schemer, learn now the vanity of weaving the cobweb meshes of human intellect to entrap and stifle the great promptings of Nature, the glorious gifts of the divine beneficence.

"*Saxa et solitudines voci respondent, bestię sæpe immanes cantu flectuntur, atque consistent; nos institui rebus optimis non poetarum voce moveamur?*"

The boy read the paragraph half aloud, slowly, musingly, with a dreamy look of delight stealing over his dark eyes, and an unconscious smile playing upon his parted lips. He re-read, pondered, and then, rising with an impatient gesture, walked to the entrance and gazed forth upon the scene, so sublime and varied, which was spread before him.

"*Saxa et solitudines voci respondent,*" he repeated, after a long pause. "The woods and rocks are echoing eternally the voice of poetry; yet, father, you will never permit me to read the poetry which men have written,—such poetry as the old Roman describes." And he turned towards the monk with an abrupt and irritated air.

Father Cyrillus lifted his eyes from the book he was perusing, and fixed them with a quiet and utterly unconscious expression upon his pupil.

"How sublime must that intellect be," he returned, smiling indulgently, and permitting no touch of satire to be evident in his tone, "which asks for a higher order of poetry than that which is expressed around you by the works of God! You are capable of enjoying it, and of uttering that enjoyment. What more would you have?"

Albert looked annoyed. His thoughts and feelings were, naturally enough, in advance of his powers of expression.

"It seems to me that Cicero meant something more noble

than a description of rocks and trees,—something of the soul, which would be the same were there nothing beautiful in the world.”

“And you would prefer reading what idlers say on such themes, to fitting yourself for declaring the power of your own soul by action?”

“Cicero was no idler, father.”

“No; but he dropped poetry in his own case with other youthful follies.”

“The ballads which Bercthold sings to his harp of the brave deeds of our ancestors, are they follies? You say that you wish me to be a brave and sagacious knight; and those tales make me more desirous to become so.”

The monk started up in his turn, and paced the cavern-floor.

“Bercthold! ever Bercthold!” he murmured, inwardly; “undermining all the barriers I raise between the boy and the world which he must never enter! If I could but find a way to shake him off! Poetry! and *then* love!—Never, never! though I am forced to betray him into my own severe and cheerless doom! though he should howl out his existence among the ‘dogs of the Lord!’”^{*} Fierce and bitter were the emotions which stirred his thoughts; but the cowl, which he rarely threw back, concealed their working upon his features, and, when he resumed his seat and his discourse, no traces of the conflict remained.

“Albert,” he said, earnestly, “must it be in vain that I strive to teach you to aspire to the poetry of deeds rather than words? Read the lives of the martyrs, of the saints, of our divine Master: there is the heaven-lent life, there the great epics of the soul’s struggles; there is true poetry! The entire subjugation of the body to the soul, out of that great love of

^{*} “Domini canes,”—an appellation of the Dominicans.

all the heart and all the soul towards God, and to their neighbors not merely as to themselves, but so vastly more; the labors, the wanderings, the persecutions, the temptations without and within; the grand, agonized life, the estatic death! These, boy, are the poets and the poems you should study,—souls keenly alive to all the beauty with which God has been pleased to adorn his world,—alive to all the graces of form, all the varied glories of light, all the fascinations of sound; yet, viewing all but as types of the higher and holier charms of futurity, they looked ever beyond and above such evanescent gifts, to the brighter light, the boundless power, of the great Fount of intellectual glory!"

The boy's mood changed beneath the monk's stern enthusiasm: his cheek flushed, and he listened half breathless. Father Cyrillus saw his advantage.

"Do you think," he continued, "that such souls would have bartered their birthright for the mess of pottage? That for the breath of men or of nations they would have become knights-errant or minne-sangers?—that, to become the theme of such lays as stir the vanity of your heart, they would have led the life of rapine and murder into which the heroism of this world resolves itself? Strengthen yourself rather for the crucifixion which it prepares for those who wrestle against it. Dark clouds are gathering around; persecutions of the spirit and the flesh are lurking in high places, to be loosed ere long upon those who hold fast the faith delivered to the saints."

As he spoke, he grasped his pupil's arm, and, drawing back the curtain which veiled a narrow oratory hollowed on one side of the rocky wall, pointed, with a look and gesture of irresistible command, to an exquisitely-carved crucifix which hung above the altar.

"Behold there," he said, "the divine poem of the salvation! Crucify thyself!"

Albert's eyes filled with tears. Overpowered by the energy

of his preceptor, excited by his own unwonted enthusiasm, he sank upon his knees with bowed head and arms reverently crossed upon his breast, which heaved with frequent sobs. There was a pause, first broken by the young enthusiast.

"My true earthly father," he murmured, "direct me; teach me the will of Heaven!" The monk laid one hand upon the boy's head, and, with the other still raised expressively towards the dying Christ, the group presented the appearance of Peter the Hermit consecrating some inspired novice to the Crusade.

"Peace be with thee, son of my heart," he said at last, his bright eyes dimmed by an unusual moisture. He made the sign of the cross on the boy's brow, and, stooping, imprinted upon it a kiss of almost passionate tenderness.

"Thus do I consecrate thee to His service from whom alone peace comes," he continued. "Rise now, my son: let us work while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

Meantime, Count Otto and the baron had wandered back into the fights and feasts of the past. Gradually the count came to his domestic life; to his gentle wife, his lovely child, the fairy-like playmate and companion in whose future life all his cares were centred. Then, with the hearty friendship of his nature, he turned the conversation upon the wife and child of his comrade.

"See here, now," he said, "how I talk, and give you no chance to tell me any thing of your own home."

"Home!" the baron repeated, bitterly, and a visible shudder ran over his frame. Then, controlling himself, he said, with an attempt to smile, "A man who has no wife has no home. And as for my son, I can see but little of him: he is in the hands of one who can train him better than I could for the sphere he is to fill. This is a new world, old comrade, and those who are to deal with it must be ready to meet it with its own weapons."

Count Otto stared in silence. The baron, with a heart far inferior to his friend's, was gifted with intellectual powers of a much higher order.

"Strong arms and stout hearts have carried us through many a storm," the count replied, after a pause, "and I see nothing better in what you call a new world."

"I do not undertake to compare the merits of the past and present: it is only the change which I regard. For myself, I am nothing! Witness my neglected towers, my slovenly band, my idle peasants, my desolate hearth!" The baron added, after a pause, and with deep feeling, "Albert must take his place not merely among the defenders of his country, but among its ornaments. He must renew all that I have permitted to decay, remove the rust of inaction from our escutcheon, and place the name of Rabenstein far higher in the annals of the Empire than I could have done, even had I been untrammelled by one fated memory. Pshaw! I am moping! Drink, friend," he said, tossing off, as he spoke, a brimming goblet of strong wine. "My boy is brave and beautiful, you think?"

"Have I not told you he should have my Ludmila?"

"But we must not leave all this to chance, old friend," the count continued: "we may both die meantime, and the boy and girl must know what their parents expect of them. Send for yon monk whom I saw in the meadow, and let him give us the benefit of his clerkly skill in drawing up an agreement, which we will both sign as well as we can," he added, with a good-humored laugh. "I like the boy: I'm sure he has a clear head and a true heart: I can trust my pet to him; and she will be a treasure worth any man's guarding, though she should have no more dowry than her mother brought me. Come; I am impatient till all this is settled."

So a messenger was despatched for the monk, and the

count beguiled the interim with singing the praises of his elfin queen, as he loved to call her.

Nearly half an hour elapsed ere Father Cyrillus appeared, and, in spite of his habitual self-command, a slight pallor stole over his face as he listened to the contract. But his hood concealed the impatient frown and contemptuous smile which chased each other over his sharp features as he gazed upon the count: he saw no danger in him, stormy though he might be. After hearing all, Father Cyrillus drew it up in due form, and Count Otto appended his signature in a scrawl as furious as if the pen had been a lance and the paper his enemy's bones. The baron added his name.

"And you are making of the boy as great a clerk as yourself, father," said the Lord of Riesenbergl.

"I trust he will make himself a greater," replied Father Cyrillus. "My skill is but slender; yet it pleases his lordship to trust me."

"He will make a great soldier, too, if I am any judge of the stuff men are made of: yet my friend here says his mother was of peasant birth. Upon my soul, it puzzles me that her son should bear no trace of it."

"And did not the same God make peasant as well as peer?" asked the monk, with some asperity in his tone.

"Surely, but for different ends; the one to rule and the other to labor. How beautiful she must have been, though!"

The baron paced the room with impatient strides during this brief colloquy; but at the last words of his plain, blunt guest, he stepped towards the door that opened on the battlements and walked out.

The monk dropped back into the seat from which he had arisen to depart, and gasped for breath as if the hand of an enemy were upon his throat. Count Otto, unobserving as he was, noticed the spasm, and, throwing back the cowl, hastened

to hold a goblet of wine to the sufferer's lips. The face thus exposed to view was deathly pale and contracted with agony.

"Holy saints!" exclaimed the knight; "is he dying? Here's a plight for a man who can kill but not cure," he muttered, crossing himself vigorously. But by this time Cyrillus had somewhat recovered himself, and feebly entreated the alarmed nobleman to take no concern for him: it was a customary pang,—a thing of no account, only oppressive for the time. "The air is my best remedy," he added; and, taking a brief but courteous leave of the nobleman, he withdrew.

"Stormy passions of man," he soliloquized, when he found himself without the castle-wall, "how weak we are in your grasp! Oh, could I take him at once by the throat and trample him beneath my feet, this agony would not so master me; but to wait, and watch, and toil, to stand each day in his presence with this fierce wrong struggling for the utterance I must still repress. How long, O Lord, how long?

"How beautiful she must have been!" said yonder dull-brained knight, judging her from her boy; and then like a gleam of lightning came before me the picture of that youthful beauty, and its contrast with the maniac glance, the haggard cheek, the wandering mind, the fearful wreck of so much loveliness and so much heart,—and I have not slain him yet! Truly, I must be a better monk than I have supposed myself," he added, with a bitter sneer,—“or a better hypocrite,” he added, slowly. “But no, no! not that! We track the wolf to his den and entrap him: how much worse is this human wolf! No hypocrite am I: I feign no friendship for him; he trusts his son to my teaching. Sacredly have I held the trust: the vows of my order have I kept to their utmost requirement. I have not forgotten the dead; but there comes no temptation from the grave. Oh, Marila, I have taught my lips to name thee as a sister; I have striven to

remember thee as such, if that be hypocrisy ; but how vainly ! Marila, my buried love, there are moments when a casual word brings thee before me ; when my heart throbs as madly for thee as when we parted in youth and hope ; when, in my frenzy, I know not how to believe that destruction and death arose between us ; when the earth fades around me whilst I call upon thee, as I do now, now." And the wretched man threw himself along the earth and groaned, in agony, " Marila, oh, Marila ! " But the tempests of the heart, like those of the air, exhaust themselves, and after a time Father Cyrillus raised his head from its mossy pillow, and, subdued if not resigned, permitted himself to be gradually soothed by the soft influences of the summer scene around him. With heavy sighs he murmured the *De profundis*, and then resumed his walk.

On re-entering the cavern, his pupil dropped the manuscript which he had been perusing, and, springing forward, exclaimed,—

" A boar-hunt, father ! we shall have a boar-hunt to-morrow ! Zdenko has found the lair of a monster in the forest, not more than a league hence : so I have sent him to the castle, and——You will not object, father, will you ? " he continued, his voice and manner all changed by the unusually sombre air of the Dominican.

" No, my son : it is my wish that you should inure yourself to every character of fatigue, labor, and peril. But the baron may not choose to permit the chase."

Again the boy's brow lowered ; but for a moment, though. Then, with the changeful mood of youth, he laughed, and replied, " But his guest will choose it."

The monk smiled in his own despite at the mingling of penetration and childlike simplicity in the remark. " Very true," he replied. " Count Otto is one of those men who never hesitate between action and inaction : a boar-hunt must stand

next to a battle in his estimation. So Zdenko may prepare you for to-morrow's chase. Go now, my son, to your noontide meal."

"And you, father, do you not go with me?"

"No, I may not yet break my fast. I have sinned, and must atone."

"Sinned, father! You!" And Albert fixed upon him a look of amazement and incredulity.

"Alas, my child, who does not sin? And for myself, let not your love for me blind you to the fact that I am among the worst of sinners. I have sinned in repining at the will of the Almighty; I have groaned over the past, instead of hoping humbly for the future. Be warned by my example." There was a long pause. Then he resumed:—"One truth I have striven to impress upon you: remember with fear and trembling that it was through woman that doubt and rebellion and the first sin darkened the earth; for the prince of this world is already beginning to weave his snares around you. Go, now, and, as you walk, recite the *qui habitat in adjutorio altissimi*."

Albert moved away sadly, and Father Cyrillus entered a small inner compartment of the cavern. The boy lingered a moment at the entrance, held by the strange fascination of horror. He soon heard the sound of the knotted scourge upon the penitent's back, and the low groans which pain and contrition wrung from his lips. Shuddering and sick at heart, the young student fled from the spot, asking himself, —as often before and vainly,—“Why does Heaven require such tortures? And shall I ever be condemned to such fearful self-inflictions?” And then, trembling lest there were sin in these thoughts, he slackened his pace and began to chant, in low, sweet tones, the 90th Psalm, as the monk had ordered him. He paused upon the edge of the stream, still singing, yet listening with pleased ear to the soft rustling of the

waters, until he came to the verse, "*Non accedet ad te malum; et flagellum non appropinquabit tabernaculo tuo*," when he began again to ask himself why should the scourge approach his tutor; for surely he must be beneath the protection of the Most High. Bewildered and pained by such thoughts, he remembered how the monk had told him that evil was a mystery, which we must avoid without seeking to penetrate: so he continued his Psalm and his course down the glen to the hut in the little grove whence Zdenko had led the horses. Here he found his simple meal of milk, eggs, and black bread prepared, and, better yet, the peasant joyful with news that all hands were making ready for the boar-hunt on the morrow's dawn, and that messengers had been despatched to request several of the neighboring lords to join in the sport.

"Now, Zdenko, if I might but ride my beautiful horse to the hunt——"

"No, no, master: you must ride the same one which I trained to face the boar for you. He is not so handsome, but he has courage, and he knows his duty; and this boar,—ah, he is a king among them. He is afraid of nothing: he has been too often chased. You must bring him down to-morrow, master: he is savage, but Zdenko will be near you."

"Do you think I am afraid?" said the young lord, proudly, while the warm blood mounted to his brow.

"No: it is because you are too brave, and you do not know danger yet. You are young and slender, too. But I am an old hunter: I am strong, and I know all the boar's tricks. When he grows mad and faces us, it would be no matter if he should happen to kill me; but you, master,—if he should harm you, what would become of us? But we would all die first!"

The next morning dawned clear and calm, and by sunrise the little meadow displayed such a motley and excited group

of knights, peasants, horses, and dogs as had not disturbed its serene beauty for many a year. Wild and wide rang the echoes with united clamor of talk and laugh, the shouts of the huntsman, the neighing of horses and baying of hounds.

When the cavalcade started, Albert found himself riding by Count Otto's side, a chosen listener to some of the old knight's favorite adventures. On they plunged into the sombre forest, now stooping beneath the branches of some giant oak which seemed to stretch forth its arms as guardian of the domain, now galloping through broad glades into which the sun peeped cheerily, throwing checkered shadows over the grass and lighting up the dew-drops like fairy gems.

Albert uttered a shout of delight when they encountered Zdenko, with the announcement that the game was up. At the same moment the dogs in advance gave tongue, and with a new impetus the whole party spurred forward. Even the gloomy Knight of Rabenstein joined in the exhilarating shout which hailed the appearance of this monarch of the wild. On he sweeps, as if unconscious of the uproar in his rear, or disdaining to hurry his steps, so little effort did there appear in the trot with which he makes for a dense thicket of under-wood in the distance. He gains it and disappears. But his pursuers are not thus to be baffled: soon they are crashing through the branches with a resistless shock; but, as they emerge into a comparatively open space beyond, they discern that the savage has distanced them.

Again the huntsmen cheer on their dogs; for some of them are sulky with the punishment they have met in pushing their way through the brush and briers: again the excited steeds are urged forward, and with laugh and shout, and mutual encouragement, the mad rout press on. An hour passes,—two hours,—and Albert and the Knight of Riesenberg are still side by side, and Count Otto praises the prowess of his young

friend, on whose heart his honest kindness wins rapidly ; but he manages, though with difficulty, to refrain from saying any thing of his Ludmila. They are now in advance of the party, when Zdenko hurries up to them, and by a significant glance directs Albert towards a path upon the left, and the three dash into it, leaving the crowd scattered far and wide.

"Now !" said Zdenko, as they cleared the thicket. Rowel-deep sink the spurs into the horses' sides, and they bound furiously on, the ringing of horns, the cry of the dogs, and the shouts of the foresters still audible.

"To the right !" shouts the peasant. "He is at bay !" And the trio wheel suddenly, and rein up on the edge of a deep and dark ravine. There, too, stood the boar. Four of the boldest of the dogs lay around him, quivering in the death-agony from the ghastly wounds furrowed in their sides : some were limping away disabled, and others, at a respectful distance, were whimpering between eagerness and fear.

"I told you I knew his tricks," exclaimed Zdenko, exultingly. He freed from the leash a powerful dog which he had kept with him, and, encouraging the others, a few instants' diversion was effected.

"Oh that I had Thunderer here !" vociferated the count, as his horse, active and powerful, but unbroken to the hunt, commenced a series of *gambades* by no means safe in front of so formidable a foe ; while the boar, with fiery eyes, and the foam dropping from his enormous tusks, shook off his four-footed assailants, and, as if conscious of his safest point, rushed towards Count Otto. The red blood gushing from the horse's flank marked the certainty of the blow, and horse and rider rolled heavily upon the ground. The infuriate monster turned to renew the attack ; when Albert, who had already sprung from his saddle, by a well-aimed and steady thrust of his boar-spear transfixed the beast behind the left shoulder. *Though mortally hurt, the savage rushed fiercely upon him,*

and the unruly movements of the count's horse had brought the party so near the brink of the ravine, that, as Albert sprang back to elude the encounter, he missed his footing, and, with the warning shout of his faithful Zdenko ringing in his ears, disappeared in the gloomy abyss.

The cavalcade came up as the conquered monster rolled upon his side and expired.

"Hound!" shouted Zahera to the serf, with the air of a madman, "is this your fidelity?" And he struck the serf a violent blow over the head with his spear. The Bohemian fell, and the confusion increased. The noblemen gathering around the spot, saw at once the hopelessness of descending there after the fallen boy: the terrified peasants shrank from encountering their dreaded lord, and dared not move without his orders. In a minute, however, two of them, who had seen Count Otto's cheerful face in the meadow upon the previous day, ventured to approach him and say that they could trace the windings of the ravine to a practicable descent at no great distance. By his efforts the crowd were soon formed into something like order, and moved steadily on after the guides, leaving the slain terror of the forest, more the conqueror than the conquered, and the still senseless Bohemian stretched near him.

Ere the first gray light gave notice of the coming day, Father Cyrillus left his heather couch and pursued nearly the same route through the forest and over plain which the hunt afterwards followed. The way became rough, broken, and precipitous; but the Dominican moved downward, now aiding himself with his staff, now clinging to the branch of a tree. Deeper and deeper grew the gloom; yet he continued as if its recesses were familiar to him, nor ever paused or looked around until he reached the narrow valley below, over whose eastern slope the morning sun peeped cheerily. Here he checked his course, *and began to examine the north side of the large trees*

on the left hand. "Thank Heaven! he is safe as yet," he exclaimed, as his eager eye discovered a cross marked in the moss upon a stately sycamore. He effaced the sign carefully, and strode on to the wildest point of the ravine, where stood a hut woven of branches so curiously interlaced with living boughs, so screened and supported by large trees around, that it would scarce have been noticed save by a woodman's eye. The monk tapped upon the rude door in a manner that was evidently a preconcerted signal; but, ere it was opened, his keen and searching glance, slightly uplifted in its wandering, encountered an object that chilled his very blood; and when the occupant of the hut appeared at his side with friendly greetings, he found Father Cyrillus standing with eyes riveted in horror upon the fatal point.

"Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight!" were the first words of the new actor upon our scene, as his glance followed the direction of the monk's eye. He spoke low and with solemnity; but his features were composed and his voice unfaltering.

The Dominican grasped his hand with the warmth of brotherhood. "When? when?" were the only words he could ejaculate.

"Compose thyself, my friend," was the reply. "The first sight of yonder death-token met my eyes with the light of day. Conrad, my early friend, do not unman me by thy fears and thy affection."

Secured against the tree was the summons of the mysterious and far-reaching Friestuhl. The stranger reached his hand and with some effort plucked the paper from its place. Quietly he opened it and took thence the farthing-piece which, according to custom, it enclosed.

"Yes, I am a child of the cord, as thou seest," he resumed, "and am here ordered to present myself upon the *Red Earth* in obedience to the jurisdiction of the Vehmge-

right. And dost thou, the sworn servant of the Most High, lament lest the *one event which happeneth unto all* should happen to me, despite our earthly wisdom and our earthly precautions, sooner than we had anticipated?"

"But so soon! so soon!" repeated the monk,—“when thou hadst scarce gained shelter here. Can I have admitted any traitor to our counsels?"

"And if so, what boots the suspicion? Those vowed to the service of the Tribunal are ever in our midst, and we know them not: sometimes they are of our own household,—yet not, thank God, of mine. Brother of my heart, remember the widow and the orphan, who will ere long need the sympathy of all Christian hearts."

"I will remember them until I forget myself," replied Father Cyrillus; "and perhaps I may be strengthened to aid them."

"Let us go in, now, and talk of other things." And the two entered the lowly shelter of the hut.

"What an enviable spirit is thine, Lewis!" said Father Cyrillus: "defeated, an outcast, thy best affections thus agonized, thy highest hopes dashed to earth, yet no frown, no impatience, betrays thy sufferings. Weary and worn, too, with journeyings and privations, and now with death impending——"

"The haven for all this weariness and all this woe," interrupted Lewis, making the sign of the cross. "Yet to human seeing it were better that I had been the monk. I can endure better than I can act, perhaps, while, with thee, only to act is to live. Thou shouldst have remained a soldier."

The Dominican raised his hand with a sharp and deprecating gesture, and a flash of agony passed over his face.

"Pardon, my brother," continued Lewis, hastily: "pardon.

I was forgetful : I did not think to touch a wound that must ever be green."

A strange contrast these two friends presented ; the monk, with his slender and muscular figure, hardened by abstemiousness and a life of constant exercise in the open air ; his thin, regular features ; his eye black, penetrating, and restless as an Arab's ; the Austrian, tall, and full in form, with fair hair and benevolent blue eyes, that seemed to look on all things calmly, justly.

"Yet you are wrong," Father Cyrillus resumed, apparently following out aloud a previous train of thought : "you are wrong, Lewis. Action is for you, possessing the self-control always to act wisely ; while for me, impulsive, violent, and revengeful, the cowl and the cord only could make me useful to my fellow-men. And now, while I see that emblem of tyrannic power and midnight assassination aimed at your life, my blood boils, and I long to set lance in rest against those self-elected judges, as when we rode side by side upon the Landschaden, who so often fled like foul birds of prey before us !" And, as he looked upon the bit of parchment which the devoted Austrian retained composedly in his hand, his eye blazed like that of a thwarted tiger.

"Peace, peace, my brother," interrupted Lewis, laying his large hand gently upon the monk's shoulder, "lest you should persuade me that I have Eberhard the Riotous to deal with. What matters it if my blood, or that of a hundred like me, should be spilled in the cause of truth ? The soil which it moistens will produce a tenfold harvest of those better and wiser, to feed our famishing country with the manna of righteousness. The cause of freedom advances——"

"You say this in the midst of defeat ?" questioned the monk.

"A defeat," returned Lewis, "which yet has in it all the elements of victory. For five years have the nobility been at

strife with Eberhard, to free themselves from his tyranny, or at least to check its progress; and now they ally themselves with him, that their combined power may crush the rising strength and intelligence of the people,—the free citizens. Think you that this will last? Like wolves they will quarrel over the spoil and turn again to rend each other.”

“Still, the Emperor’s purposes are unchanged: he sides ever with the victor.”

“And what then? Is he aught but an instrument in the hands of the Most High? Are not the very efforts he makes to secure his own power and the aggrandizement of his family continually acting against his intents? If, by fraud, intrigue, and bribery, he gains a principality, behold his own son countermining to mortgage it for the means of debauchery and riot. Whilst he bends and truckles to Papal power and French wiles, we see, by the marriage of our Princess Anna with the English king, a counteracting influence, a blessed ray of purer religion stealing upon us through the medium of these proud, bold islanders. England, blessed nurse of liberty, when shall we rival thee in that?”

“And how to hope for it, with the nobles to trample on Liberty in the open day, and the Secret Tribunal to slaughter her at midnight?”

“Ah, Conrad, can the sight of this paper so dazzle your vision that you can no longer discern the light of life which begins to dawn for us? Is not Janow ever at the side of Charles,—ever laboring in the cause of conscience and of resistance to the many-headed monster of superstition and religious usurpation?”

“Ah, Lewis, Lewis, let not your own generous strength lead you to over-rate the Emperor’s confessor. He is, indeed, all that you say: he is devout, honest, pure of heart; but he wants what you are rich in,—the inflexible resolve, the stern persistence, which will lead a man through the sloughs of persecu-

tion, through the flames of martyrdom, if he see the light of God's command beaming beyond those terrors, hear the still, small voice calling him onward! Here Janow will falter, will fail. I know him."

"I understand you. Still, he sows the good seed, and the harvest will be rich in many a stronger bosom than his own. You, my brother, may live to see this. But it is vain to talk to you to-day: your mind can contain nothing but this." He held up the parchment, on which the monk's eyes were fixed with a gloomy and irritable look.

"You are right: the vision of your bleeding body interposes between me and the future," replied Conrad. "But there is many a dell, many a cavern yet, to which the emissaries of the Free Judges must be long in tracking you. To-night I will come for you——"

"No!" interrupted the Austrian, with quiet firmness, "no: you are yet unsuspected: higher duties than the preservation of one life demand your exertions, even could that life be preserved: we know it can but be prolonged for a few days. Yet I will come to you if you wish it," he added, as he marked the expression of pain upon his friend's features. "I remember the path to the foot of the Rabenstein: after midnight you will find me there. But you must hide me far enough from yourself for your own safety. Go, now; go. I had many things to say to you; but you are in no mood to listen with understanding."

The monk groaned aloud, but made no reply, while his friend led him with a kindly violence to the outside of the hut. They stood silent for a few moments, when the acute hearing of Father Cyrillus aroused him from his reverie.

"Hearken!" he exclaimed, as the faint note of a horn broke the stillness like a fairy echo. Nearer, and yet nearer, it swelled upon the breeze, until the duller ear of the Austrian caught the strain; and then the distant bay of hounds pro-

longed the sound. "Idiot that I was," the monk broke forth, "when they spoke to me of a boar-hunt, I did not think to ask in what direction lay the game. Again! Hark! Yes, it is the horn of Rabenstein. The chase is on the plain above. Should some unlucky chance——"

"Nay, nay! what chance should plunge them into this deep, dismal glen?" said Lewis. "You are too anxious, far."

And now, like phantom-warnings from the sky, came the mingled noises from the invisible heights, which overhung the listeners,—the cry of dogs, the blast of the bugle, and the shouts of men. "That is Albert's *mot*," said Conrad, "and Zdenko's shout," he continued. Again he listened earnestly for a few seconds, when suddenly rose a hoarse yet faint cry, and then came a dull, crashing sound, as if some weight were plunging helplessly through the thick boughs. With suspended breath, and a death-like fear almost blinding him, the monk sprang mechanically forward and commenced scaling the side of the ravine, followed by Lewis. With the strength of desperation, they forced their way upwards. Suddenly a tangled and wide-spreading vine arrested them, and half sustained by it, half clinging to it with the grip of death, was the slender form of the young heir of Rabenstein. Catching him in his arms, and making his foothold firm against the trunk of a huge tree, the Dominican, aided by Lewis, tore open the boy's doublet. "He breathes! he lives!" burst from his lips, after an instant of agonizing suspense. "Quick! quick!" And, with the precious burden upheld between them, they achieved the toilsome and dangerous descent; hid him upon the turf by the little spring a few paces from the hut, and dashed the cold water freely upon his head and breast. Albert lifted his eye with a drowsy, unconscious gaze, and then closed them again as if inclined to slumber; but Lewis raised him in his powerful arms, and satisfied the

anxious monk that his pupil had received no injury beyond the nervous shock consequent upon his fall.

"Now, the saints be praised, who sent me hither this morning!" ejaculated Father Cyrillus: "But they will be searching for him: the peasants must know the path: you will be betrayed! Albert, my son, arouse yourself! Can you walk? What a mischance is here!"

"Patience, patience!" exclaimed Lewis, with unruffled composure: "there is time enough for my safety. See there! his glance becomes rational. He knows you now."

"Fly, in Heaven's name!" exclaimed Conrad. "They are coming, man and horse. The thicket will conceal you. Fly, or you will drive me mad! on farther, where the dell is narrowest." Lewis obeyed. The next minute the peasants appeared, followed by the whole party of huntsmen. The Baron of Rabenstein flung himself from his horse and snatched his scarce-recovered heir from the knee of Father Cyrillus. Albert lifted his languid eyes as he felt the sudden grasp; but, on encountering his father's face, released himself with an effort of which he seemed incapable, and threw himself upon the breast of the Dominican.

The baron groaned bitterly and turned away: the nearest peasants kept their eyes resolutely bent upon the ground, while a few of the older knights exchanged glances. Count Otto, who fortunately saw nothing in the scene beyond some wandering of the boy's mind, relieved the awkwardness which all present felt, by setting himself to the task of consolation.

"Poor boy! poor boy! his head is sadly jarred, no doubt; but no harm done, save a few bruises, perhaps; no joints out of place, no bones broken. We must get him home. His father or I can take him on the saddle before us, and some old crone of your household will make him as well as ever to-morrow,—with fomentations and charms, per-

haps," he added, laughing, "you Bohemians know so much."

By this time Albert had sufficiently recovered to ask for Zdenko. Father Cyrillus looked around. "He asks for Zdenko," he repeated, addressing the peasants. The men shrank together, and the foremost of them bent an imploring glance upon the count. The old knight understood the mute appeal and replied, not without some hesitation, "Zdenko? Oh, we left him above there with your horse, Albert, and the carcass of the boar. Ah, that was a brave stroke, boy! You saved my life, I am sure."

"It is very strange that he did not come for me," said Albert, querulously. "But perhaps he is hurt too; perhaps he is killed! my poor Zdenko! Tell me quickly!" he faltered, catching hold of the count's arm.

"No, no, my child," returned the count, striving to throw somewhat more assurance into his tone. "I tell you we shall find him above; and, if he had brought your horse, you are not strong enough to ride. Come; you must consent to let me take you home with me: I warrant he will be there before us."

He threw himself upon his horse as he spoke, and Albert, still feebly repeating, "But it is very strange Zdenko did not come for me," permitted the peasants to place him in the arms of the kind old knight. "Come with us, father," the latter said to the Dominican: "we may yet need some of your skill in leech-craft. We shall go slowly; or, if you will ride, some of these youngsters can dismount for you,—though horsemanship, I know, is not much in the way of you of the gown."

Cyrillus declined the horse, saying that he should reach Rabenstein soon enough for any aid his pupil needed.

One of Count Otto's squires, with great courtesy and reverence, continued to entreat the monk's acceptance of his

stood: and in the exchange of words to which it gave rise, Father Cyrias observed the youth's eye wandering to the fork of the tree whence the summons of the Free Judges had been removed.

The colloquy was closed by Count Otto's signal for starting. The latter led the way, keeping well in advance, that his blanched cheek and compressed lip might not be observed. The Knight of Riesenberg and his charge followed, and the Dominican, with a composed demeanor, yet with every nerve racked by rage and anxiety, walked closely by the side of the esquire, whose glance towards the tree had betrayed his mysterious trust.

"He is but newly initiated," said the monk, mentally: "so young, too, to be entrapped into this trade of assassination!"

"So young! but he only wants practice," was his after-thought.

In fact, the handsome countenance of the Esquire Henry was not one to make a favorable impression upon an observer of experience and penetration. The features were good, but there was a general want of frankness in their character; the eyes were brilliant, but their look was vacillating and stealthy, and beside the worthy Count of Riesenberg he seemed like the tiger of the jungle couched watchful and silent over the path of the unwearied traveller, contrasted with the lion with sagacious brow and majestic step, announcing his approach by those roars before which the denizens of the forest fly in dismay.

All this was a sealed book to Count Otto. In the evasive glance he saw only the deference due from youth to age and honor; in the sudden violence, amounting to bravado, with which Henry sometimes met the practical jokes or witty words of his companions, or of those whom he fancied of less importance than himself, only the natural and generous impetuosity of youth. Placed in the household of the Count of Riesenberg

as a page, Henry had passed from that state to the dignity of an esquire, and was now awaiting the chance to win his spurs: apt, attentive, and respectful, he had perfectly satisfied the count and won upon his regard, being from the first in possession of his sympathy as the son of a knight who had fallen fighting bravely under the banner of Riesenbergh.

As the party slowly disappeared from view around the first winding of the dell, Lewis, who had gathered sadly the last glimpse of his friend's dark mantle and white tunic, emerged from his covert.

"He is gone," he sighed, heavily,—“friend as sincere and firm as enthusiastic! And of whom else can I say the same? He is gone, thinking to meet me again. Yet God alone knows if that comfort is in store for me.”

He drew from his breast the summons of the Free Judges. “The saints forgive me that I deceived him!” he continued, glancing over it. “It was but to spare his quick, warm heart the pang of knowing that this was the third warning I had received. In this world I have but to pray and wait. If I had but told him that my wife and daughter would be in Nuremberg! But God will guide him to them, or guard them by other means. His will be done!” And the doomed citizen re-entered his hut, to fall upon his knees with a pure and lofty resignation. His sacrifice was accepted!

The peasants, meanwhile, were reconducting the knights from the ravine. As they were about quitting its darkness for the open space above, the Dominican felt a slight touch upon his robe. He slackened his pace gradually, as if wearied, and, falling back, cast a glance to the right, where he met two gleaming eyes belonging to a Bohemian, screened by a huge tree, and heard the name of Zdenko.

“Where?” he asked, in the same tone, still moving slowly on, and observing, by a side-glance, that the eyes kept upon a line with his own.

"To the right—the baron's lance—the boar!" were the words he distinguished in reply.

"He has blamed Zdenko for Albert's fall, and has slain him," was the monk's thought.

Before he had decided upon his plan of action, Count Otto relieved him from any responsibility.

"See here," said the old knight, turning to the nobles who were quietly following in his rear, full of sympathy for their comrade and his suffering heir; "we have left the trophy of this boy's prowess stiff and stark upon the upland there. We must not return without it."

These words reached the ear of the father, as he rode still in advance of the rest. He drew himself up in the saddle, and spoke, as if in continuation of his friend's remarks, with a gesture to the serfs,—

"Bring the boar to the Rabenstein, and see if the carrion I struck down be living or dead!"

"My lord," the monk said, "have the goodness to take Albert to my hermitage in the meadow. I will remain and look to the spoils of the hunt."

"To your hermitage, father?" asked the count. "Why not to the castle?"

Ere Father Cyrillus could utter the reply he had framed, the baron wheeled his horse abruptly upon them.

"To the castle!" he said, in a harsh and broken tone. His eyes flamed with exasperation as he bent them upon the monk. The latter, unmoved, bent his head simply in acknowledgment of the order, and quietly joined those who were now moving towards the spot where they expected to find the two dead bodies,—that of the serf, however, being of infinitely less value in the eyes of the knights than the carcass of the wild boar, which the hunters found stretched in grim rigidity. Near it, a crimson spot on the bright turf marked where the Bohemian had lain; but himself and the horses had disappeared.


"He lives!" ejaculated Father Cyrillus, internally; and he gave a deep sigh of relief.

The slain monster was speedily raised, and with many ejaculations of delight at his size and weight, and of surprise and admiration for the slight hand which had felled him, he was borne away. The monk was followed by one of the serfs into the edge of the nearest thicket. There Zdenko was stretched, his own and Albert's horses standing over him, their melancholy eyes fixed upon the pale face of their keeper. They pricked up their ears at the approach of footsteps, but forbore to stir, as if fearful of injuring their friend.

The Dominican mused an instant. "Men desert and murder each other," he said, "while the brute creation retain sufficient remembrance of benefits to strive to guard and save those who have served them."

Zdenko lifted his eyes. He was not insensible.

"Courage, my son," said Cyrillus: "with a little of my care, you will do very well." Zdenko muttered something inaudibly between his clenched teeth; but the sinister gleam that flashed from his black eyes translated its import sufficiently. Proud and irritable, he had essayed on his first return to consciousness to withdraw himself from the spot to which he knew those would soon return who had witnessed his unjust humiliation. Probably any one of his fellows would have endured it as does a dog the kick of a more brutal master. But his wife had been the nurse of the young lord; he himself had watched over the boy from infancy, and had thus been brought into a sphere the associations of which had awakened his intelligence, and trained his native sensibilities into what his masters held, in themselves, as honor,—something beyond the mere desire of vengeance for personal outrage. The monk understood all this: he could analyze it even better than could he in whom he read it. He assisted Zdenko



to a sitting posture, and, carefully parting the long locks, the native blackness of which was fearfully contrasted with the red blood that soaked them, strove to examine the ghastly wound which traversed the skull and the upper portion of the brow: familiar as he was with the effects of violence in the form of cuts and bruises,—for the monk was the leech and surgeon of his flock,—Father Cyrillus looked anxious.

“We must get him home,” he said; “but I must first look for an herb which should grow about here.” And plunging farther into the recesses of the wood, he returned with his hands full of leaves sovereign as a styptic, which he bruised until the cool moisture oozed freely from their fibres, and then bound upon the wound. Then he sat by him while the serf went for further help; but, with the best despatch, it was night ere the sufferer was placed on a couch of fresh heather in the lodge, and suitable medicaments administered to him.

The monk next hurried to the castle, where the first person he encountered was Berethold.

“Father,” he abruptly began, “the baron is more savage than usual. He has swallowed as much wine since he returned as he generally drinks in a day. He has had my young lord, weak as he is, taken into the great hall and seated by his side at the board; and you know, father, how that must act upon him,” he added, lowering his voice.

They entered the banquet-hall together.

“I thought you would expect me, my lord, on Albert’s account,” Father Cyrillus said quietly to the baron. The latter, half inebriated as he already was, showed some embarrassment; for his son sat pale and reclining in his chair, with much the expression that he might have worn if chained within reach of some noxious serpent.

“See here,” he said, coarsely: “it is time my son mixed

with men, with knights, instead of growing a woman, or, what is worse, a monk, at your side."

The Dominican bowed deferentially in reply.

"Come, come," shouted Count Otto, in his frank, jovial voice; "I shall not hear my young defender nor his tutor slandered, even by you. If there is any one here who ever gave a better blow than Albert gave this day, let him speak. I, for one, never did."

"Nor I! Nor I!" repeated the older guests.

Father Cyrillus meantime held the wrist of Albert enveloped by his long, slender fingers. "With your leave, my lord," he addressed the baron, "I will administer a medicament which I think he needs." And, without awaiting the formality of a reply, he took from his pouch a small vial containing a dark-colored fluid, and, measuring a few drops slowly and cautiously, tempered them with water, and held the draught to the boy's lips. He swallowed it with a slight gesture of disgust. "Now," continued the monk, "if your lordship will permit me to suggest, he should be placed in bed. His head is weak yet, and," he added, assuming more of the physician's authority, "if he be awakened after this shall have taken effect, I cannot be answerable for the consequences."

The baron turned pale. There was an expression in the Dominican's eye with which he was not yet sufficiently senseless to trifle. A stout servitor bore the lad from the apartment, and after seeing him comfortably deposited and under the charge of the faithful minstrel, Father Cyrillus hurried to the side of Zdenko.

A raging fever was already devouring the serf's blood and distracting his brain; but just at dawn, by dint of his attendant's skill and ceaseless efforts, he fell into an uneasy slumber, and the monk seized the moment to step without the door of the lodge and refresh his own exhausted frame by inhaling the pure breath of morning. The birds were chirping their first and

interrupted notes; the dew lay heavily upon the rich turf, and distilled the fragrance of the wild thyme, over which the bees already hung lovingly. Above the rocky heights on the west hung a blue mist, and through it the drowsy sheep and goats who stood gazing contemplatively upon the vale below, loomed like the spectres of those strange monsters of the antediluvian world with whose bones the caverns beneath them abounded. After a while the call of the herdsmen began to resound at intervals from the hills. Overcome by the reaction consequent upon so much bodily fatigue and mental excitement, the Dominican seated himself on the threshold, and soon fell into that inexplicable state in which, while we are fully conscious of the place where we are and of existing circumstances, we seem to be endowed with a double existence. The various sounds of awakening nature blended gradually into one harmonious strain; and that strain was the voice of Marila calling him from the mountain-top. He would have moved to join her, as in the days when they tended their flocks side by side; but suddenly the rich, soft tones of the maiden's voice changed into the blast of the trumpet, and thick and fast came the figures of armed men into the meadow. In vain he strove to elude them, and force his way towards the rock where his early love, her slender form in full relief against the ærial canopy of saffron and blue, bent caressingly towards him and waved her graceful arms to hasten his approach. The mail-clad warriors hemmed him in, and, passing one by one as it were in review before him, pointed to their shields, on which the mottoes blazed in a lurid glare that seemed to sear the unwilling gazer's eyeballs. Ambition! War! Persecution! Rank! Wealth! Power! were among the words he read; and each knight, as he moved by, raised the vizor of his helmet and revealed to the spell-bound dreamer the face of a skeleton. Yet all the while he knew the whole scene was but an unreal torture, and

that with a slight effort it would vanish; but he was powerless to burst the mystic bonds that enthralled him. And still the shadowy form of the maiden urged him towards her, growing, at each ineffectual effort he made to obey her summons, more filmy and indistinct. As she finally melted away, his ghostly tormentors also disappeared, and while with straining vision he strove to follow the vanishing phantom of his early bliss, on the spot whence she disappeared an invisible hand upheld a burnished shield, on which the word Freedom! glowed in letters of gold.

"Marila!" gasped the sufferer; and with the word he threw off his thralldom. "Marila!" he repeated, in heart-broken tones, stretching forth his arms with frantic energy.

"Yes," he continued after a pause, "yes, my sin is ever before me! those ghostly wrecks of human pride rising from the charnel-house of my own heart to mock me with the hideous emptiness of worldly aspirations! And she, the loved, the lost. Ah, what could sustain me under such agonies of memory but the devotion of my life to that spirit which for Marila's sake I have enshrined upon her altar in my heart,—the spirit of Freedom? Shall I yet be rewarded with the power to serve it?"

A hand was here laid upon his shoulder, and a low, guttural voice replied,—

"Doubt it not. Every word of truth poured by you into the ear of the oppressed is a breath of freedom to their fainting souls; every act of aid and sympathy, the balm of freedom to their bleeding hearts. Each word of reason, each judicious display of independence, may prove a beam of light to the oppressor."

The monk sighed wearily.

"See here, Conrad," continued Lewis: "when I took the trouble to cross the Danube,—which is by no means a pleasant cradle on a stormy night,—when I plunged into the depths

of yon forests, climbing, not at all with the ease and fleetness of a wild goat, to the top of some precipice, only to run a worse risk of breaking my neck in descending on the other side,—a process vastly more disagreeable than crossing the Danube in a storm, inasmuch as it is of a more suicidal character,—when, I say, I gave myself all this fatigue and anxiety for the purpose of taking shelter under the folds of your robe, I fancied that I was only under the necessity of screening myself for a time from the brutality of the Duke of Eberhard, who, after he had glutted himself upon my wealth, would soon forget me, and I could then return to Esslingen and my usual avocations. But now that those eyes, which, themselves unseen, see everywhere, have fixed their fatal glance on me,—now that the knife which never swerves is aimed at my breast,—now, in short, that the Free Judges have marked me as their victim,—all further care for my safety is idle, and my only hope is that I may drag no one with me into my yawning grave.”

Father Cyrillus was about to reply, when a violent movement of the wounded man drew both to his side. Zdenko opened his eyes and glanced around with the vague, agitated look of delirium.

Fixing a timid, terrified gaze upon the monk, who was about applying a lotion to the wound, “You are Conrad,” he said, after a pause. The monk started back with an expression of dismay almost equalling that of the speaker. “Yes, you are Conrad,” continued the sufferer: “it is strange I did not know you before. Yet how could Conrad live without Marila? He died. What are you, then? One of the devils who are crushing my brain! Why will you look like Conrad? Go, go! in the name of Christ!” And, with a look of horror, he strove to thrust the Dominican from him.

“Strange as it may seem to you,” said Conrad to Lewis, “Zdenko’s wanderings are the first evidences of recognition

that I have encountered in the many years since my return; and stranger still is that subtle working of the mind, which discovers to him now in its disordered state, what he has so long failed to see in health."

"You are changed indeed," said Lewis, with a long look of compassion. "I doubt if I should know you, had I not known your secret; and that forewarns me that Elizabeth will not remember you, and will be, naturally enough, poor soul! slow to trust you, without some token from me."

He drew from his finger a ring of great value, but more remarkable to a *connoisseur* from its quaint and antique setting than its intrinsic worth. "This was brought me from Florence, by a merchant with whom I had had dealings for large amounts during many years. On my Anna's last birthday I placed it upon her hand——" He paused, and walked up and down the room, to subdue the agitation which these remembrances excited. "When I was about parting from her," he resumed, "the dear child, knowing that I could be but scantily provided with money, forced it upon me, as something which I could make useful in case of necessity. That necessity will never come. Take it, therefore, my friend, and restore it to her."

The monk took the ring silently, and deposited it in a place of safety.

"Now," continued Lewis, "I have yet a richer treasure, which I could neither destroy for its own sake, nor could I leave it to entail danger, and perhaps death, upon my wife and child."

He took from the breast of his doublet a small packet, and, opening it, showed to Conrad a manuscript, beautifully executed in black letter. "Here," he said, "is a portion of the writings of that bold Englishman, John de Wykliffe. You will know how to preserve and use it. Should the right time ever come, you can return it to my Anna; if not, you may find oppor-

tunity to instruct her in some of its truths. I believe now I have laid upon you the full burden of my last will and testament."

Father Cyrillus wrung his friend's hand earnestly as he took the manuscript from him. "John de Wykliffe," he repeated,—“one of those men who seem destined by Heaven to leave a mark upon the age in which they live that shall endure for all time; a man quick to see wrong, fearless to denounce it, firm and just to resist it. But he is of England, where Freedom seems indigenous,—where all are so swayed by one spirit, that no vulgar ambition, no petty tyranny, can crush the sense of right which beats in the great heart of the people. Whilst here, on this distracted soil of Germany——But what boots it to talk? There have been pure and strong spirits among us: God will send such again in his own good time. Lewis, I will care for your bequest as for life and limb. And well I may; for your present danger is greatly owing to your possession of these heretical words, and your too fearless avowal of respect for them."

"Possibly," answered Lewis: "but we burghers of the free cities have our own pride and our own privileges, you know, which, I dare say, we sometimes use without discretion. For the present we must rest conquered. But that will not last long. *You* will see the change," he said, with a sad smile and emphasis.

A knock at the door interrupted them. Conrad hurried his friend into the second apartment of the lodge, and then drawing the bolt, he found Berethold. With a sign that enjoined quietude, the monk allowed him to enter.

"Mother of Heaven!" ejaculated the minstrel: "what is this?" And he pointed to Zdenko's death-like form.

"You have not heard it?" responded Father Cyrillus. "But who would venture to repeat it?"

He related the occurrence briefly. The old Bohemian's

face flushed, and his still clear and brilliant eye sparkled with angry feeling, as he listened.

"For his sister's sake——" he commenced, in a smothered voice, and then, checking himself, as if guilty of an impudence, he turned away.

"But, it was of my young lord that I came to speak to you, father," he resumed, after a pause. "The baron is as frantic as he was yesterday. He has told Baron Albert that he shall no longer quit the castle, but begin now to lead the life for which he was born and which all his ancestors have led. He will give a feast to-day in honor of his son's first exploit in the chase, and has already ordered that all his vassals and retainers repair to the castle for a holiday. You know all, reverend father: you know that to be kept thus by the baron's side will kill my young lord; and he has sent me to pray that you will come to him."

"What a retribution!" murmured the monk.

He stood for some moments thoughtful and anxious. He dared not desert Zdenko and Lewis: he scarce dared to neglect Albert's request: he understood the boy's deep and mysterious sufferings in the presence of his parent. Finally he turned to the minstrel, who stood respectfully awaiting his reply.

"You must tell Albert that I cannot promise to be at the castle until after mid-day. Tell him to remain patiently,—to be courteous and attentive to his father's guests, but to keep chiefly by Count Otto's side."

Berethold went his way with an uneasy aspect. He had a vague dislike to the monk,—a sort of ill-defined jealousy and even suspicion of his influence over Albert; but he knew, too, that only Father Cyrillus could check the baron in his moods, and soothe the young lord to endurance of the baron's presence. The Dominican had gradually become, to his view, a mysterious yet necessary evil.

In a short time a boy brought the fresh milk and black bread which formed his ordinary meal; and, the two friends having broken their fast thus simply, Lewis took post by the side of the sick man, while Conrad, stretching himself upon the earthen floor and across the entrance, that he might be on the alert should any one apply for admission, sought the rest he so much needed.

And now the peasants of both sexes and every age were gathering, eager to enjoy the momentary pleasure offered them, even with the counterpoise of being under the eye of their dreaded lord. On one side of the meadow they pursued their rural sports,—the young men alternately vying with each other in rude feats of strength and agility, dancing with the bright though sunburned beauties of their choice, while the old looked on to approve and direct, or, collected in groups beneath the shade, listened, with the simple delight of children, to tale and song.

The guests, too, entered upon the recreations customary to their rank: they tilted, ran at the Turk's head—an exercise of German origin—and at the ring, tested each others' skill in horsemanship and the various training necessary to the character of a complete knight in that age. Berethold's harp and legendary lore were in request. As the old man warmed into the ancient traditions of his people, the chords rang beneath his nervous fingers, and his still melodious voice chanted expressively the simple yet strongly-descriptive lays of love and war,—the two themes which, in their infinite and always stirring varieties, made the chief history of man in the olden time.

Through all the unwonted sounds that filled the air, Father Cyrillus slept the sleep of exhaustion; but they rang through the irritated brain of his patient, calling up scenes of the past which in his healthful state never found egress from his lips; and Lewis, as he listened to his ravings of strangely-mingled

joy and horror, obtained from those rehearsals a clew to much that had surprised and puzzled him in the monk's changed fate, habits, and associations. He had known that the sudden and mysterious loss of his betrothed had turned Conrad from the camp to the cloister: more his friend had not revealed, nor had he sought.

But what a revelation came now in the broken sentences of tenderness, grief, fierce hatred, and wild despair which fell from the lips of the delirious Zdenko! The watcher's blood ran cold as he listened, and, almost mechanically, he crossed himself with fervor, and, falling on his knees, breathed a heartfelt prayer for the repose of the dead and the solace of the living.

* * * * *

The afternoon was fast waning when Father Cyrillus reached the castle, where he found the uproar and confusion so much worse than on the preceding day that he uttered an aspiration, rather more zealous than became his calling, for the speedy consignment of the boar's carcass to the depths for which it was destined, and as speedy and entire a dispersion of the revellers who were gathered around it.

The stout wines were doing their office potently: voices the most familiar were now so hoarse, thick, or broken that the monk, as he entered the banqueting-room, had some difficulty in tracing the sounds to their proper owners; faces usually the most deferential in expression now looked impatience at the intrusion of a churchman upon their revels.

With his customary firm, quiet bearing, the Dominican moved towards the place which the Lord of Riesenbergh made between himself and Albert. The worthy count had found it well to keep his head amid so much disorder.

"Listen to the young fools!" he whispered, as the monk seated himself. "As for the old ones, the wine has made them too sleepy for much talk. It would seem as if they had but

lately learned events which are affecting the interests of the whole Empire."

"The Emperor has done well," here exclaimed one of the party, "to confirm Duke Eberhard in his government and his measures. These insolent burghers are crowding upon the heels of the nobility, as if the red gold of their vulgar traffic were equal to the red blood of our ancestors."

"At the rate the free cities are proceeding, in a few years we shall not know serf from suzerain," said another.

"These merchants are bees, that should be kept in their hives to amass honey for their masters," shouted a third.

"Since this last defeat, the honey must have flowed pretty freely from their cells into the governor's coffers," chimed in a fourth.

"There should be a crusade preached against all the rebellious spirits of the day. Here we have the Waldenses, the *sub utraque*, the English heretics, besides all the grasplings of the citizens after rank and power. The Emperor is too lenient: he should crush all these follies at once."

"As if men could be crushed like worms!" muttered Count Otto to the monk. Amid all the prejudices of his age and rank, the good knight had a heart whose native generosity could not be entirely smothered.

"However," resumed the third speaker, "the citizens are smarting pretty well now for their presumption. One of the ringleaders—a greater upstart than his fellows—has escaped the cord twisted for him. Lewis is his name. He has left a wife and daughter mounting guard over his strong box. But the governor is too generous and gallant to keep women on guard: he'll take charge of the merchant's goods and promote his daughter according to her beauty."

For the first time, a change might have been observed in the monk's countenance. A livid hue overspread it, and the muscles became rigid with suppressed emotion; his hands,

hidden beneath his mantle, were clenched until the nails penetrated the skin. He trembled lest he should lose all self-command; but fortunately the strong tones of the Lord of Riesen-berg rose instantly upon the speaker's brutal attempt at wit:

"Silence, young man! and, if you've not been taught it heretofore, learn now, that a knight's first duty is to respect the unfortunate next to his God,—since it was in the sphere of the poor and oppressed that it pleased Him to walk upon the earth."

"How, sir?" interrupted the first: "do you dare to speak of the Emperor's enemies as oppressed?"

"I have credit enough with the Emperor to speak what I think;" retorted the stout count; "and he would uphold me in saying that he who has been felled by the lance should not be smitten by the tongue. Ask your heart—if you have one—how you would like to hear your sister threatened with the power of Eberhard the Riotous."

"Hear him!" interrupted another of the thick-tongued disputants: "he disgraces his rank, to compare women of noble birth with the daughters of mechanic burghers!"

"Shame! shame!" arose from various voices.

The baron here sprang from his seat; but, as he opened his lips to enforce the respect due to his best friend and most distinguished guest, his words were checked by the abrupt entrance of a peasant, whose terror-smitten tongue could barely articulate the word "Murder!"

That word, so often and so carelessly uttered, heard, too, so carelessly, yet when brought before us in all its fearful reality, what a chill, mysterious awe it sends through the stoutest frames, making the sternest hearts almost forget to beat!

There was an instant of breathless silence and suspense, when Father Cyrillus bade the serf lead the way, and the whole suddenly-sobered crowd, full of a new excitement, rushed madly from their revel, and in another minute were

plunging down the rough hill-side towards the meadow, whither the inferiors of every grade had preceded them. And there, at the mouth of the glen we have described, with the sun yet high in the heavens, with the birds still filling the groves with their carol of joyous life, and the bees emitting their hum of ceaseless industry, lay the corpse of Lewis the Austrian!

Shivering with agony, the Dominican yet controlled himself to such demeanor as suited a servant of the Church called to the death-scene of a stranger. He waved the throng aside with authority, and after a few seconds of investigation, shook his head despairingly, and with a stony calmness recommended the soul of the departed to the mercy of God.

Now the men asked of each other who was the murdered man. But none could tell; and the women gathered around with looks full of terror and words of sympathy, with fast-falling tears and loud sobs. He had left wife and children, they thought,—for he was not young; and then their pity broke forth afresh. He looked like a good man, some of them said; and, in their eagerness to trace his lineaments, they pressed each other on, until the foremost started back with horror and affright, finding that they had dabbled their feet and garments in the fresh blood that had gushed from the back, where the fatal blow was struck.

Count Otto was the first who spoke to the purpose. "He was a Christian man like ourselves," said the worthy knight,— "better, I trust, since he is first called to his account. Let us remove him to the castle, and see to his decent sepulture."

He crossed himself and looked at the baron for approval. Zahera was about to reply assentingly, when Father Cyrillus spoke, suddenly and sternly:—

"My lords, you would be right, but for that sign." And he pointed with an unfaltering hand to a poignard thrust into the ground at the head of the corpse, with the *wyd* or cord

significant of the power of the Secret Tribunal twisted around its handle.

"It is the dagger of the Vehmegericht," said Count Otto, in a low voice, after he had looked closely at it; and he bent his head in acknowledgment of the highest power of the Empire.

"The Vehmegericht!" was passed from mouth to mouth in deferential tones throughout the crowd.

As the word spread, a wide space was cleared around the victim. The boldest shrank from the spot where the hand of the Tribunal was visible. The young heir of Rabenstein only was about to utter some words of generous reproach, when the monk seized him by the wrist, and enforcing silence by a stern look, said, in a cold, firm voice, "this stranger has fallen by the justice and the judgment of the Vehmegericht, at once as an expiation of his own crime and a warning to others. We have nothing to do here!"

Amid all the agitation consequent upon the first disturbance of the feast by the announcement of the murder, Father Cyrillus had not failed to observe that young Henry of Lichtenstein was absent from the board, and to discover him afterwards amid the crowd at the entrance of the glen, as if he too had arrived there, surprised and awe-stricken like the rest.

"It is a debt of the future!" the monk murmured, beneath his hood.

The guests hastened to the renewal of their revel: they needed more wine to obscure their recollections of the disagreeable scene they had encountered. Directing Albert to return with Berethold, the Dominican attached himself to the side of Count Otto.

"My lord," he said, suddenly, "if you will pardon my presumption, I would ask you to retrace your steps for a short distance and enter my humble shelter."

The count assented.

The serf slept; but this sleep, not natural, but produced by powerful opiates, added to the fearful pallor and entire prostration of his appearance. The count started, supposing himself in the presence of a corpse.

"So he died?" he said to Father Cyrillus.

"The saints forbid!" was the reply. "He will live, I think. I have striven for it; I have prayed for it." He paused, and considered the expression of the nobleman. Apparently it satisfied him; for he resumed,—

"It may seem presumptuous for an humble son of the Church to venture upon the affairs of persons so high in worldly power and consequence——"

"Not so; not so," interrupted the worthy knight. "The Church is our common mother, it is true; but even the least of her sworn servants are able to direct us rude laymen in matters where, of ourselves, we might stumble and go astray. Say on, father, without scruple."

"You have betrothed your daughter to my pupil: of course you are concerned for his future life."

The count assented.

"You will still pardon me, my lord, if I seem to be meddling in matters beyond my vocation; but Albert is as dear to my feelings as I permit any thing of this world to be,—my only earthly care."

Count Otto began to look perplexed.

Father Cyrillus proceeded:—"The baron has expressed his determination that his son shall now cease the studies in which he has been engaged under my charge, and enter upon the sort of life which has occupied himself and his guests yesterday and to-day,—varied only by an occasional quarrel with some neighbor, in which one is to rob, and the other to be robbed."

The old knight colored somewhat, rubbed his brow, and

looked inquiringly upon the speaker: he was not accustomed to a statement so unvarnished of the pursuits of men of rank, even from a monk.

"For passing day after day in a hunt or a foray, followed by a debauch, the heir of Rabenstein is not fitted, by nature or by the training which I have so far given him. Forced into such a career, the whole glorious promise of his youth will be blighted; while, left still to my care, he will prove, in council, camp, or court, all that you would wish your son to be. What I would ask of you, my lord, is, that you will express to the baron your satisfaction with the course he pursues in the education of his son, and with the proficiency Albert exhibits in those things which become his birth and future career. This the present position you hold with regard to each other permits you to do; and, believe me, the boy's happiness greatly depends on the influence you exert."

"Good father," returned the count, "I begin to comprehend you. You know the lad better than I can, and, from what I have seen of him, you must be right. There is something about him that puzzles me, to-be-sure, but I like him: he is not made of common stuff; and I am willing to trust my share in him to your training."

"Thanks, my lord; thanks. Your kindness relieves me of a grievous anxiety."

"And I am very glad you have spoken. I own I should like the husband of my daughter to be different from the youngsters who are drowning their brains above there, and to make a different appearance in the eyes of the Emperor; and I shall give my old friend to understand it."

"Do so, my lord, and the future will amply reward you."

Here Zdenko began to toss uneasily and utter low moans: he then opened his eyes, and stared vacantly around.

"Conrad!" he called, with effort, "Conrad, return, or Marila is lost!"

Conrad arose hastily, and, raising the sufferer gently in his arms, endeavored by changing his position to divert the current of his thoughts. But the serf's delirium was too wild to permit any consciousness of external things.

"Albert!—where is Albert?" he raved on. "Let him look at me: his eyes will cool my brain; they are like his mother's—like the soft starlight and the evening dews. Why does he leave me?"

Count Otto's gaze vacillated from the sick man to the monk, with an amazed and perplexed expression.

"My sister," continued Zdenko, "our herds are calling us. Since Conrad left us, you do not hasten to lead them forth with the early dawn."

"Who is this?" exclaimed the count, turning imperatively upon the Dominican, "and of what, of whom, is he talking so strangely in connection with Albert?"

"He is the brother of Albert's mother," returned Conrad, in a hollow voice; "and it is of her that he thinks and speaks continually in this fever-fit, although in health nothing but his devotion to her son shows that he remembers his sister."

"Father," continued the Lord of Riesenbergl, "I could wish to know more of this."

"Count," was the reply, "I am the baron's confessor."

"I will keep my promise," the count abruptly exclaimed, after a moment's consideration: "Albert shall be my son and your ward." Then, grasping the monk's hand, he left the hut quickly, and hurried towards the castle.

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Conrad, "a storm is at hand." And, while he gazed out into the gathering darkness, the wind sobbed heavily amid the grove around him, and the river behind dashed on with a sullen voice. He lingered to listen if other noises disturbed the silence of the vale; and again the tumultuous element swept through the tall pines that crowned the encircling rocks, with a rushing sound like the surge

upon the great sea's bounds, and, hurrying on, died away in low, fitful sighs.

The watcher crossed himself devoutly, and, turning, entered the inner apartment, and, taking a small hunting-horn from its place, issued from the back entrance of the lodge; blew a low but prolonged and peculiar note, and seemed to await a reply.

"I am a fool!" he suddenly exclaimed: "they know that nothing but the blast of a magic horn could penetrate this wind, which, while it bears my note to them, must sweep theirs away from me. Of course they are on their way."

In five minutes more two figures were at his side. In whispered yet energetic tones, he gave them directions in the Czechen tongue, and, bestowing on them a fervent benediction, dismissed them. Without reply they vanished into the darkness, while the increasing storm howled threateningly and the big drops fell from the black canopy above.

Father Cyrillus re-entered his lowly shelter to watch and pray.

* * * * *

In Esslingen, the richest and proudest city of the Hansa, a low but spacious apartment, richly furnished after the fashion of the age, contained two sorrowing, trembling women. Both were attired in plain, sad-colored garments, without ornament. These were Elizabeth and Anna, the wife and daughter of Lewis the Austrian. Knowing and fearing all the dangers that surrounded them, still, woman-like, they clung to their household gods.

The mother was of a tall, thin figure, her features sufficiently regular, with an expression sensible, and earnest almost to sternness. She looked, indeed, like one who had known care and sorrow without shrinking before their antagonism,—the quiet, reasonable, true helpmeet of the responsible citizen.

Anna, though but fifteen years old, already surpassed the medium height of woman, and the fulness of her moulded

bust and drooping shoulders were as much in advance of her age as was her stature. Hers was that gentle beauty so often found united with statuesque size and proportion; her brown, luxuriant hair was parted smoothly over a placid brow; her almond-shaped lids opened over eyes of hazel, full of dove-like softness; and her mouth, though somewhat large, was adorned by lips so sweet in expression and healthy in hue, parting always with a smile so truthful and words so kind, that the gazer forgot to prefer the more chiselled loveliness, which is often rather severe than winning.

In contrast with the rich hangings, burnished plate, and glittering Venetian glass with which the wealthy burgher had delighted to adorn the abode of those he loved, those two drooping figures looked the gloomier.

They had sat long in silence. Anna spoke first; with the young hopefulness of her loving nature, she drew her mother's head caressingly upon her own shoulder, and said,—

“Perhaps we need not go, dear mother. If the Governor has all my father's wealth, he will be content. What will he care where two poor, toiling women dwell?”

“My child,” returned Elizabeth, “do you forget your father's last direction that we should take shelter in Nuremberg? and, even were he not one of the best and wisest of men, it would be equally our duty to obey him.”

“I was thinking only of the grief I can see it gives you to leave the home where we have all been so happy together.”

“To lose an earthly home should be but a small part of our cares at any time; but now, Anna, we should especially dread lest we may lose a heavenly one. There are reasons for our flight—beyond the mere love of life—which it is quite as well that you do not now understand. The future throws its burdens upon us fast enough as it becomes the present: be satisfied that we must go. God will find us a home and friends.”

As she spoke, they heard the outer door of the house opened stealthily, and an unbidden guest entered the room in which they sat. The young girl's heart fluttered like that of a newly-caught bird. The mother lifted her eyes coldly and quietly towards the intruder; but, encountering a face not entirely unknown to her, they assumed a less guarded expression.

The new-comer's face, not less than his garb, proclaimed him one of the despised and rejected among men—a Jew.

"Your pardon, good ladies," he said, with that peculiar accent which betrays the Israelite in whatever language he expresses himself.

"You are welcome," replied Elizabeth, "while we may yet call this shelter our own. Since your oppressor became ours, we have tasted of a bitterer cup than you have known."

"You speak truly," returned the Jew, "inasmuch as he bereft me and my people but of gold, while with you he ravens both for life and booty. Yet you are happier than the poor Jew, for you have a country and a people; a liberty for which you may strive; we have only the gold with which we hope to rebuild the temple of our fathers' God, and we live toiling amid persecutions, to die despairing."

While he spoke, Anna, with her gracious smile, placed a seat for him, and then moved silently from the room to procure refreshments after the Oriental fashion. Her father's traffic brought him into frequent intercourse with these people, and in her love for him she observed all that seemed useful or pleasing to him. She compassionated the sad, oppressed-looking men, who seemed strangers upon the face of the very earth in which they had a birthright in common with the rest of mankind, but where every man's hand was against them.

The merchant's love of political freedom had led him into the path of freedom of conscience. In his travels, and the varied associations with men of every rank, clime, and creed,

necessarily produced by his pursuits, he had learned that man has *no* liberty unless he has *perfect* liberty; that it were as rational to lop one branch from a stately tree and commit it to the earth in expectation of its growth, as to pluck one leaf from the chaplet which wreathes the brow of the great goddess, and expect that leaf to remain green, thus severed from its nurturing source. Lewis was not a man of genius; but he was a man of sympathies, of earnest purpose, of honest observation. He could perceive, that to give the soul but one outlet for the perfection of its powers and aspirations, was to leave the body but one limb, and expect it, thus dismembered, to retain its full healthfulness and acquire its full utility.

The Jew's eye followed the girl's retiring figure with a quick, anxious glance, and then turned to the mother with an expression which showed that necessity was struggling with embarrassment.

"Speak," said Elizabeth, answering his thoughts: "I am prepared for any thing."

"I and my father's house are indebted to your husband for many cares in our behalf. It was he who saved our lives from the great persecution, in which so many of our people perished, in the early days of the Emperor's reign. His prudence and kindness rescued much of our wealth from the rapacity of the Governor, that man of greed and violence. It is but now that I have found any chance to return his benefits; for the God of Abraham has hitherto blessed the household and the store of the Christian who dealt with the Israelite as with a brother."

"Lewis hath ever striven to do justly; but speak on, I entreat, for my troubles have made me impatient. It was my husband's order that we should leave this oppressed city and take refuge in Nuremberg."

"Therefore I came to you," returned the Jew. "Many

dangers threaten ; but the worst is, that your departure will be obstructed."

"Why?" exclaimed Elizabeth, trembling. "So that we leave our gold, what more does the Governor require? And Anna was but now hoping that he might permit us to remain."

"The Holy One of Israel forbid!" exclaimed Ozias, with Oriental fervor. "Better that the maiden should die than rest where the hand of that ungodly prince has power!"

The woman sprang upright, and then sank again helpless upon her chair, as if an arrow had cleft her heart.

"Holy Mother!" she gasped: "are there yet worse ills in store for us than loss of husband and father?"

"He has seen Anna, and has called her beautiful to look upon. Her name has been uttered in his gross revels over the wine-cup—and——" He hesitated. The mother raised her hand, in sign that she could interpret the rest.

Anna now re-entered, bearing a silver tray, with coffee prepared after the Turkish fashion, and sweetmeats that looked golden through the transparent syrups in which they were bathed.

Ozias took the cup of fragrant Mocha from the hands of his fair entertainer with profound reverence; and it was but by stealth that he raised his melancholy eyes in time to mark the soft flush which warmed her cheek.

"Anna," said her mother, "Ozias comes to prepare us for further trouble."

"My father?" exclaimed the young girl, nervously, tears gushing from her limpid eyes.

"No, my daughter. But we must hasten to resign our home, because we may be compelled to remain in it."

Anna smiled with childish simplicity.

"That would be compelling us to our happiness, mother. But I do not understand you."

For the first time in her life, this Christian mother had recourse to subterfuge:—

“Is it not possible, my child, that the duke, knowing your father’s devotion to his wife and child, may think it wise to keep us as hostages, in the expectation that this may lead him to deliver himself up?”

“Let us go, then, dear mother, this night,—this hour, if we can.”

“It was that I came to propose,” the Jew said. “It is a great thing I ask of you, lady—to trust your child and yourself to my care—for I am little known to you; but I swear to you by the one great God who made both Jew and Gentile, that I have sure advice of the duke’s intentions.”

A loud, authoritative knocking at the outer door here startled them.

“Father Abraham!” ejaculated the Jew: “if I should have come too late! Should I be seen here, I cannot save you,” he continued, addressing Elizabeth. The latter stepped hurriedly to one of the nooks formed by the projection of the huge chimney, and, raising the hangings, motioned Ozias to conceal himself behind it. She then took up a candle, with the intention of going herself to the door, but her hands shook so violently that she replaced it; but this second comer entered as unceremoniously as the first. He was a man some forty years of age, of perfectly German figure and physiognomy: full six feet in height, his bone and muscle were well proportioned to his stature: his forehead was high and fair; eyes light blue, of the peculiar shape and prominence which marks the choleric temperament; nose inclined to aquiline, with expanded nostrils; the lips full, but without curvature; the chin massive and well rounded. All in all, he would have been handsome, but for the look of indulgence which stamped his countenance and manner. A thick yellowish mustache covered his upper lip, and heavy locks of hair

of the same hue were brought forward upon his face, as if for the purpose of serving as a disguise. His dress was rich in materials, yet simple in form and color, after the fashion of a substantial citizen of that date; but his whole bearing so belied his attempt at concealment, that the most unskillful eye would sooner have taken him for the leader of a band of unscrupulous *condottieri* than a sober citizen.

Elizabeth, with her keen glance and practised judgment, saw at once, through borrowed dress and manner, that the unbidden and unwelcome guest was neither burgher nor man-at-arms. A certain unmistakable, and in this case unintentional, air of authority, widely different from impertinent familiarity or coarse violence, betrayed itself in the very gaze the stranger fixed on the two trembling women into whose unprotected home he thus boldly entered.

Shivering with a new and indefinable apprehension of evil in the presence of this intruder, Anna sat as if under the spell of an enchanter. The mother, on the contrary, nerved by a certainty of all the ills that threatened, stood firm, collected, and almost haughty, as, with a manner suited to the intruder's rank, she acknowledged his presence. He remained hesitating and evidently embarrassed. "I am the steward of the noble Lord of Eberhard, Governor of Suabia," were the words in which he at last announced himself.

"The steward of the noble Lord Eberhard, Governor of Suabia, is the servant of him who is the master of this house and all that it contains," was the reply of the mistress of the mansion. "What is it his pleasure to require in the household of Lewis, the humble citizen, the defeated soldier?"

The steward colored slightly as he gazed on this frail yet undaunted representative of the intelligence and self-reliance of the people. He found it difficult to fix his eyes first upon the heavy silver goblets and vases, so costly in themselves, so rare and almost priceless in the excellent device and work-

manship with which the artist's hand had enriched them, and to say distinctly, "My lord is the conqueror: he has the right of the strongest to the wealth which the industry and prudence of the plebeian have collected." Neither could he point to the plebeian's daughter and say, "This, too, is a portion of the spoils which my lord's valor has won: deliver her up to him."

The position was not without awkwardness, even to the agent of Eberhard the Riotous. He seated himself, however, as he was invited, and recommenced:

"His lordship has no commands, my good lady, unless you choose so to construe the expressions of good will towards yourself and your lovely daughter which he has ordered me to deliver. But be seated," he said to Elizabeth, with a condescension so unaffected, so plainly unconscious, that a fit of trembling seized the poor woman, which forced her to comply with the courtesy so singularly extended to her under her own roof. ~

"As I was saying," the stranger went on, "the Governor has sent me to express his good will to you, and to assure you that he has no intention that you shall suffer for the folly of your husband——"

Here Anna interrupted him with the anger of the dove which sees its nest assailed.

"Who are you," she exclaimed, "who dare to speak thus of my father in his own house, and in the presence of his wife and child?"

The steward smiled admiringly upon the young girl, whose filial love inspired her with an energy evidently not natural to her.

"I have told you who I am, beautiful Anna," he replied; "and surely you are too gentle and too generous to blame me for obeying the commands of my master—so harsh a master, too, as you must have heard—eh?"

Elizabeth interposed to prevent any imprudence on her daughter's part :

"In this house, sir," she said, "we never hear ill of any one."

"That is well," returned the steward ; "since from you, at least, he merits kind words only. My errand is to say that in your case he remits the fine which their rebellion has brought on the rest of the citizens."

"Sir," answered the mother, respectfully, yet with pride, "you will present to the Governor our grateful acknowledgments of so unmerited a consideration ; but at the same time I entreat that he does not compel us to receive it. My husband and myself prefer in all things to share the fate of our friends ; and I think he has not earned any immunity beyond them. Gold and silver are of little value to him or to us, while he has to fly for his life."

"True ; but no doubt it is of value to him for your sakes."

"He knows, that should the Governor think fit to take all we possess, we can toil willingly and hopefully."

The stranger laughed slightly yet good-naturedly, and, drawing nearer to Anna, attempted to possess himself of one of the fair and well-shaped hands that were folded before her.

The young girl colored deeply at this familiarity, which she felt to be an indignity, and changed her position quietly but decidedly. The offender seemed to be amused with these demonstrations, as the cat seems to amuse herself with the mouse which must finally afford her a meal.

"My pretty bird," he said, "I meant only to ask how those tender fingers were likely to support the toil of which your mother speaks so pleasantly. Turned out of your costly cage to buffet with the storms of poverty, you would soon droop and die. You are no eagle or falcon, sweet one, to mount in the sun's fierce eye, or spread your wings towards

the rocks where the thunder rattles loudest. The shady grove and murmuring fountain are for you: that sweet throat was made to tune its song in knightly hall, and that soft cheek to repose on the protecting breast of a knightly lover."

Terrified and ashamed, Anna hid her face in her hands, and the tears dropped fast through her delicate fingers. Elizabeth arose with flashing eyes and confronted the audacious speaker.

"Who are you?" she asked, in a voice broken by fear and anger.

The stranger arose at the same moment, and, removing the young girl's hands firmly, but not ungently, from her eyes, said,—

"Look at me, Anna."

She raised her head slowly, and, having once met his gaze, kept her eyes, more beautiful through the tears that suffused them, steadily and reproachfully fixed on him. His own look softened beneath hers.

"Am I so monstrous?" he asked, smiling.

Anna's eyes fell again, and she blushed, she knew not why.

The stranger gently raised to his lips the hands he still held, and, turning then towards the mother, said, in a calm and not unmusical voice,—

"I am Eberhard the Riotous."

The next sound the two women heard was the closing of the door behind him.

As the footfall of the wild and reckless noble was heard in the street, Ozias issued from his concealment. Shame and indignation glowed in the fierce light of his eyes and in the red spot that burned upon his cheek.

"The sceptre is departed from Israel," he said, in a voice smothered by contending emotions, "and her sons cannot rise

to protect the oppressed or do justice to the injured; but, believe me, could it have profited you, I would have confronted yonder unrighteous prince with no armor but a strong heart and the memories of my nation's pride, no weapons but these hands, nerved by the Power through whom Samson tore the lion that roared against him. But, alas! what but evil could the hand or voice of the down-trodden Jew bring upon the women of a Christian household? As a serpent winds his course through the grass, as the fish cleaves his way beneath the waters, so must the sons of Judah pursue their path. But it is written that his hand shall be on the neck of his enemies. 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!'"

The Jew's words had ceased to be addressed to his listeners, and had become the agitated outpourings of a troubled spirit. Anna had hidden her tears and blushes on her mother's shoulder; but, as the speaker went on, she forgot herself in the wild and melancholy cadences which fell with such strange sweetness upon her ear. He paused abruptly, and, meeting Elizabeth's distressed and anxious look, seemed embarrassed by the emotion he had displayed.

"Pardon, good lady, that I waste time in such idle thoughts. If you have indeed resolved to trust your safety to me, you must begone at once."

He spoke to the mother; but his eye sought a reply from that of the daughter.

"We will trust you, and thank God, who has sent us such help in the depth of our trouble. But what right have we to involve you in this peril? You will be discovered and ruined by aiding us. I know well, when once the persecutor is roused against your people, how long it is ere he is gorged with blood and plunder. Daughters as innocent as mine, mothers as sorrowful as myself, men as brave and good as Lewis, may perhaps pay the penalty of my selfishness. Leave

us to our fate, Ozias; I dare not risk the bringing such a burden on my soul," replied the conscientious woman.

Ozias did not heed her: his soul sat listening at his eyes for the voiceless answer of the daughter of a strange people. Slowly the trembling girl lifted her timid glance: it rested only an instant upon the watcher; but the faint light of imploring confidence thus revealed was sufficient to warm him into new efforts.

"Have no fears for me or mine," he said: "all care has been taken, all things provided. Only go, ere the night wanes so far as to excite suspicion. God will demand this jewel at your hands; and how will you answer him, if you neglect now the means of redeeming her from the grasp of the spoiler?"

"It is a fearful choice," murmured Elizabeth, "between mine own hazard and that of others. May God forgive me if I am too weak!"

"Believe that He sent me to you, and all is as He wills."

"Let me, then, prepare some stock of money for our need."

"No, lady, no: it were not safe. Let me pass out through yon gardens; I will then return to the street, and go slowly by your door. Wait only to wrap your mantles around you, and follow me; for we must not be seen together. Move on with composure, as if you were on your way to the house of some neighbor, and within half an hour you will be safe and unsuspected. Courage, therefore; for He will be with us who shut the lions' mouth that his prophet Daniel might come from their den unharmed."

Elizabeth could not speak; but she pressed the Jew's hand with fervent gratitude, and then silently guided him forth as he had directed.

On her return, she found Anna already prepared for their walk; and they went forth, homeless fugitives, following the footsteps of a man of whom they knew little save that he was honest in trade, and whose birth was, in the superstition

of the age, synonymous with all that religion—so called—denounced,—with fraud, with magic, with all fearful and unholy intents and deeds.

Anna's trembling limbs could with difficulty keep pace with her mother's steps.

"Mother," she whispered, "Ozias bade us move on composedly. You are getting too near him. There is a sentinel at the foot of this street. For Our Lady's sake, take breath before we come upon him."

Elizabeth paused, but made no reply. She bent her looks towards the western horizon, and then said, in an undertone,—

"The furious storm that is coming may excuse haste."

Heavy drops of rain pattered slowly on their faces while she spoke, and, as they rounded a small bend in the narrow and crooked street, a torch suddenly flashed upon their eyes: not only the sentinel, but a group of some dozen troopers were a little in advance of them. A cold shudder ran through the mother's frame; but she checked it at once, and, saying to Anna, in the deep, firm tone of desperation, "Remember, if we fail now, we are lost," moved steadily forward.

"Here's light to console us for the want of the moon," shouted one of the foremost, dismounting as the women attempted to pass the group, and catching Anna by the arm.

"Why do you stop us, sirs?" asked Elizabeth, in a voice which, with great effort, she succeeded in rendering firm.

"Are you so ungrateful as to desire to go by us without paying tribute to the guardians of the city?" replied one.

"Who protect you from Jews, heretics, and greedy citizens," chimed in another.

"Let us proceed, then, on our errand; and we will thank you for keeping our streets so that we can traverse them safely by night as well as day."

"We must see first if your ransom is worth taking," said the nearest speaker, snatching off the mantle that enveloped

the young girl's head and shoulders. But, before he had time to view the face he thus exposed, a violent blow from an invisible hand sent him reeling against one of his fellows, and both fell prone to earth together. A shout of derision burst from the rest, and the two thus overthrown sprang up and continued their game of cross-purposes by a simultaneous assault of oaths and blows. The leader of the party, a young esquire, who had been exchanging some words with the sentinel, now interfered to command a cessation of the confusion and to inquire its cause. Each of the combatants violently accused the other.

"Thou art a fool!" shouted the one who had suffered from the indirect effects of the mysterious arm; "and what little brains thou hast are so muddled by the beer-flagon, that thou canst not tell thy right hand from thy left. Dost thou talk of my striking thee, when thou didst nigh drive me into the ground with the weight of thy unwieldy carcass? I've a mind to teach thee which way thou wouldst have fallen had I taken thy ox-head in hand!"

"Peace, hounds, ere I take the butt of my lance to you both," said their leader. "Whom are you stopping here?" As he asked this, one of the men held a torch so that its glare fell full upon Anna's face. Ghastly pale as she was from the terrors of the unusual and revolting position, the young man evidently recognised her, for he demanded, in an angry and disturbed tone,—

"Who molested these women?"

All were equally guilty in intent, and none cared to betray the active offenders.

"You, Carl and Fritz, are the most likely to be forward in this matter; and that blow, too. Speak up, knaves: if one of you gave him that wound in defence of the maiden, I promise him his handful of golden crowns in the morning, and the count's favor to boot."

There was still a dead silence, and then another person entered suddenly upon the scene,—a Jew,—who rushed from the nearest door-way and flung himself upon his knees at the feet of the young leader of the band.

“Pardon, noble sir, pardon, then, that I dared to protect this Christian maiden from the rude hand of your vassal.”

Anna uttered a faint shriek at this unexpected apparition; for that Ozias did not appear was a relief to her mother and herself. The young esquire started and crossed himself, to ward off the pollution of such a presence.

“Speak out, dog,” he said, in a trepidation which ill became his responsibilities, “and tell what all this means before I pin you to the ground with my lance.”

Thus adjured, Ozias explained that he was on his way home, when, perceiving the approach of the men of war, he had hidden himself behind the door of the house, which he knew to be deserted, and in evil repute among the people.

“And therefore the more likely to suit thy unhallowed race,” interrupted the esquire.

“Noble youth,” returned the Jew, with a tremor in his voice, which his questioner interpreted into a flattering acknowledgment of his own might, but in which Elizabeth heard the workings of secret rage, “I feared lest I might be detained; and, while thus waiting, I beheld one of these troopers seize upon the maiden——”

He paused an instant, and added,—

“Will it please you, noble captain, to step from hearing one moment?”

The young man consented, and retired a few paces, though with visible reluctance, first taking the torch from him who held it.

“Verily,” continued Ozias, “I thought to do my duty towards the mighty Lord Eberhard in punishing the assailant; for, as he withdrew the veil from the woman’s face, I saw she

was Anna, the daughter of the rebellious merchant, and I knew that the great count had looked on her with an eye of love. What reward would he have for those who ventured to touch rudely the treasure he had reserved for himself?"

"A long cord and a short shrift. But why didst thou not call on me, instead of risking thy own wretched life by harming a Christian subject?"

"Thou wert not at hand: had the girl reported to his lordship that her lips had been touched by one of his soldiers——"

Ozias looked meaningly into the face of the esquire.

"Thou art keen, Jew," said the young man, his cheek flushing with vexation. "Let this matter rest, and I will stand thy friend; and thou art apt enough to need one in these days. Repeat it, and each man thou seest there shall be a bloodhound at thy heels, who will have his fangs in thy throat ere another month, despite all thy windings and hidings."

"Nay, if thou threatenest, thou wilt drive me to shelter myself at the noble Governor's footstool," replied Ozias, pursuing the advantage he had gained: for it was well known that in one point Eberhard pursued an even-handed justice: Jew and heretic were safe who ministered to his pleasures; but woe to the warmest son of the Church who thwarted them.

"I am no match for thy craft, Jew," returned the esquire: "there must be truce between us. You must needs see the faces of these women, knaves," he continued to his men. "Uncover thou, dame: nay, no harm is meant thee. Look at them well, now. Remember them; and remember, too, that whoever molests them will have to answer it to his excellency the Governor. And let him who has any desire for a stretched neck be the first to tell of this night's doings; for I pledge you the spurs I hope to wear, that nothing less will come to any of you if the matter reach our lord's ears."

Go thy ways, Jew, and be careful to forget," said he to Ozias, who glided from sight like a phantom.

"You, dame, get to shelter quickly, for a frightful night is coming. And a word in thine ear: the wife of Lewis has the credit of being a discreet woman: if so, she will keep silent about this adventure, for her daughter's sake."

And, with this warning, he put himself at the head of his men and moved rapidly off. Without a word, Elizabeth took the direction of the Jews' quarter: it was there only that Ozias could intend to conduct them. She had scarce changed her route thus, when a hand touched her lightly, a voice whispered, "I am here," and the Israelite passed in advance of them. They pursued the sound of his footsteps. Every minute the way became more lonely: the storm, too, had settled over their heads in its wrath, and the garments of the women were saturated with the pouring waters; the glare of the lightning showed a region utterly strange to them, and the fitful electric torch illuminated a scene so squalid and miserable that they recognized it as the Jews' quarter. The footsteps ceased; the dark outline that preceded them paused, awaiting their approach, and the trio stood before a door, which was opened at the knock of Ozias, after some words in the Hebrew tongue had been exchanged between himself and those within.

He then guided them through one and another narrow passage, apparently into the very recesses of the dwelling, and, tapping lightly, then for the first time addressed his guests: "I place you in the care of my mother and sister."

The mother came forward, saying, "Enter, lady: the stranger and the afflicted are our sisters; and to the master of thy household we owe it that we have a welcome and a shelter for his family. Rachel will conduct you to an inner chamber, where you can exchange your garments and repose from your fatigue."

"Thanks," was all that Elizabeth replied; but the word was uttered with a simple earnestness that vouched for its sincerity.

They followed Rachel, therefore, through this first room into a second, where the various Eastern luxuries of the toilet surprised the simple German women, while the apparel already spread for their choice, afforded additional proof that they had been expected, and by hospitable hearts. A stout hand-maiden stood by to render her services in disrobing, bathing, and arraying them in the rich foreign garb which looked so strange in their eyes. The three re-entered the presence of the mother of Ozias and Rachel, who led them with deference to the seat of honor at the hospitable and profusely-spread board prepared for their refreshment, and entreated them, with Oriental courtesy, to break bread beneath the roof of the humblest of their servants.

There was a signal at the door, and Ozias re-entered, supporting on his arm a patriarch of fourscore, whose wan and weary aspect told of many a burden besides that of years. Rachel and her mother hastened to receive the old man, and seat him with the tender zeal his position and his infirmities demanded. The two guests also arose out of respect to the aged master of the mansion. It was as well that this little commotion should serve to conceal the mingled shades of surprise, delight, and sadness which flitted in such strange blending over the features of the younger Jew, as his eye rested on the young and stately beauty of Anna displayed so glowingly in the attire of a woman of his own people: if he thought of the dove's eyes, the lips like scarlet, and the neck like the tower of David, sung by the royal poet, it was in a far more literal sense than Rabbinical wisdom would have sanctioned.

"I have brought my father to counsel you," he said to Elizabeth. "You have trusted me already very far; but there

are many things yet to be done, many perils to be met, and I dare no longer ask you to go by my guidance only."

The old man motioned his guests to approach him.

"These are of the household of Lewis," he said, scrutinizing their faces anxiously; "and they have come to the poor Jew without doubt and without fear. Truly, they are worthy to be his: he is a good youth. And the maiden is fair to look upon. Ah, many are the afflictions of the righteous."

"But the Lord hath commanded concerning us, father," returned Elizabeth: "He hath brought us to thee, who hast known affliction and hast found the paths of wisdom."

"Who is wise, save the God of Abraham?" murmured the Jew. "And of what avail is the wisdom of this world? *for many are oppressed and have no comforter; and though the oppressors have power, neither have they any comforter.* But thy husband came to me when the hand of violence was upon me, when the iniquity of covetousness raged against our people: he rescued me from the grasp of the spoiler, and the remnant of my gold and silver did his wisdom secure for me. The Lord hath rewarded him with wealth and with power, and though for a time clouds and darkness hang over his tabernacle, yet the light of the All-seeing Eye will be again revealed to him."

Ozias remained reverentially silent while his father spoke. He now came forward and said,—

"My father, wilt thou explain to thy guests what thou hast thought should be done?"

"May the God of the strong and of the weak teach his servant that counsel which shall keep your feet in the path of safety!" said the old man, devoutly. "But that safety cannot be found in this house, nor in this city. To-morrow will that man of sin and strife, whom your own people call 'Eberhard the Riotous,' search for his prey. While the darkness yet covers the face of the earth, you must be gone."

There was a pause. The speaker kept his eyes fixed steadfastly upon those of the Christian woman: possibly he sought to discover if the trust she had placed in his son was but the mere impulse of the moment, which hurried her into rushing she knew not whither, in her horror of the impending evil, or if she really felt hope and confidence in the truth and kindness of the Jew. Elizabeth's glance never moved: she awaited his further remarks with respectful attention, but there was neither anxiety nor agitation in her countenance. Satisfied that the trust reposed in them was untroubled and unreserved,—

“My son has been many days preparing for your escape,” he continued, “although it need not have been so abrupt, but for the Lord Eberhard's visit this evening, and this encounter with his men of war. A safe-conduct is provided for you as two women of our tribe who are journeying to Nuremberg. You will be mounted on fleet horses: faithful guides will accompany you as your servants. Once without the city, you must not spare your horses' strength nor your own, until you reach a spot where you will find a company of those men who sell their own blood and spill that of others for gold and booty: Free Lances are they called. I have had dealings with their leader for horses and for arms and armor. He is not so bad as are many of his trade: he is a knight of the Empire, and hath regard for his oath, even with a Jew; and there are other reasons why he will place you in safety as he hath promised.”

The old man closed his eyes, as if weary, and Ozias spoke,—

“Never forget that you are Jewesses, good ladies, nor be troubled that you will be shunned and perhaps even reviled: there is nothing to be feared: this knight of whom my father speaks, although he would think it contamination for a Jew to touch the hem of his garment, is yet so true to his

bargain that he will fight for you, if your liberty is endangered by any less foe than the Emperor or the Pope; and by neither of these are you likely to be pursued," he added, with a faint smile.

While he spoke, the young girl unconsciously kept her eyes fastened on his, with the pleading look of a frightened child. With a smothered sigh, he turned from her towards her mother.

"Lady," he said, "your husband has treasures, by which he hopes that you may profit: they seem but light to you in your present troubles, but the golden key unlocks many doors. It is needful, therefore, that you intrust some one with the direction of your wealth."

A painful flush lighted his dark cheek as he spoke; but Elizabeth relieved his embarrassment by saying—

"You are right, good Ozias, and I shall be most thankful if, without endangering thyself in the Governor's suspicions, thou canst obtain the disposal of my husband's wealth. Our neighbor, the honest Hermann, is known to thee. Though timid and wary, he is our true friend. His house and our own communicate by the cellars, for mutual safety. Give us the means of writing, and we will direct him to afford thee access through the secret doors."

Rachel brought parchment, ink, and a quill, and Anna traced a few lines at her mother's dictation. This order, and the keys Elizabeth gave him, Ozias placed in his father's hands, while Rachel led her guests again to her tiring-room. Their costly robes were hastily changed for a dress suited to the exigencies of the occasion, and both were wrapped in the dark veils and mantles under which the Jewish women concealed their faces and forms when abroad.

With tearful eyes and murmured sentences of comfort in the figurative style of their language, the Jewish mother and daughter took leave of the fugitives. The old man spread his

trembling hands solemnly over them in benediction, and they sank involuntarily on their knees to receive the parting words of this servant of the living God.

"The God of our fathers comfort you, my daughters," he said, "and be a screen by day and a fiery light by night around your path, that your enemies may be confounded, and that you may live to show forth his praise!"

The rage of the elements had subsided, and fitful glimpses of the moon could now be caught between the huge, gloomy masses of vapor which rolled along the sky. The fugitives uttered a silent invocation as they re-crossed the threshold, and meekly resigned themselves to the will of Heaven, deeply thankful for the singular and devoted aid granted to their desperate need.

The light of a torch held by the man-servant showed them two men on horseback, and three led horses. Placing them carefully in their saddles, Ozias himself then mounted the third steed, to their great relief, and, charging the elder of the guides with the care of Anna, led the way to the Christian portion of the city, with his hand on Elizabeth's bridle.

The iron gates, by which his suffering and down-trodden part of the population were shut off from those who, with equal cruelty and arrogance, refused to consider them as fellow-creatures, were now closed: it was necessary to arouse the guardian from his lair. This the Jew effected by the potent name of Count Eberhard of Wurtemberg.

"And does Count Eberhard of Wurtemberg expect Christian men to leave their sleep for a hound of a Jew?" thundered the enraged keeper. "A thousand curses, but you may wait till morning!"

"But the noble lord's passport, most excellent sir—if you will but condescend to examine it by this light——" And Ozias extended his left hand with the open safe-conduct, and his right, well covered with silver marks.

The trusty warder drew a long breath, and, taking off his pointed hat out of reverence to his lord's seal, it fell in a position to receive unobtrusively the tribute offered to his official dignity.

"Ah, yes, it is the count's mark, surely," he returned, "for there is the sign of the cross by it, which would have burned a hole in the paper if it had any unholy words upon it."

The northern gate of the city was at last reached. A word of caution was breathed to the German women to utter no sound, whatever might betide, no word, whatever might be addressed to them, and their protector advanced to meet the most formidable difficulty of their design.

The usual challenge was given, the password returned, the usual amount of oaths and abusive epithets showered upon the heads of all Israelites from Jacob down, ere the sentinel could arouse the officer in charge of the guard at the sally-port. The Governor's seal, however, was not to be trifled with.

"But why is it, Jew, that you steal forth thus under cover of the night?" sternly demanded the officer.

"Noble sir," replied Ozias, "these women of my tribe are permitted to travel under the escort of the worthy knight Sir Adolf of Weinsperg, and it was not until after nightfall that we received the commands of that excellent nobleman to join him in season to start by the first dawn of the morning. And moreover, if you will be pleased to read the command of his highness the Governor, you will perceive that he hath honored his servant Arah, the son of Elam, with charge of certain moneys belonging unto his highness."

The wary Jew uttered this in full confidence that the alphabet was the mystery of mysteries to his interlocutor.

"If the excellent knight would condescend to accept the thanks of the poor Jew," said Ozias, while the warder and his aids opened gates and lowered the draw, and the sentinel

in his round had turned his back upon the speakers. The silver marks fell as silently as before into the hand of a guardian of the Christian faith. The Jew instantly remounted, and led his little party across the bridge. It was time. The tramp of horses was heard in advance and approaching them. Anna perceived her rein hurriedly seized—but this time by their protector instead of his servant. The warder also heard the sound; and, saying, “It is young Rupert the count’s esquire, returned from his scout,” he directed that the draw should remain down for the passage of the newcomers. They dashed past the fugitives and reined up on the bridge. Ozias also halted, and heard the question, “Who are those?” asked in a voice he well remembered—the voice of the esquire who had intercepted them a few hours previous.

“On!” exclaimed the Jew, in a suppressed but earnest tone, to his followers. He uttered one word in Arabic to the two horses he guided, and with the rush of an arrow they sped forward. “Have courage, maiden,” he said to Anna, who uttered a slight exclamation at this sudden change of progress: “these horses are of the best blood of Araby: they will be fresh long after the clumsy, corn-fed brutes of yonder troopers are blown, should they pursue us.”

As he spoke, a furious galloping, mingled with fierce shouts and execrations, reached their ears.

Weary, terrified, and giddy with this rapid flight, Anna was conscious of the tone only, not the words, of her consoler; her head drooped; she felt a muscular arm gliding around her waist—alas for the barriers which separated Jew from Gentile!—and was scarce conscious of any thing but motion, until she heard a challenge from the half-ruined castle where the Free Lances of the leader, on whose word and arm the Israelite depended, were quartered. Private signals were interchanged; the fugitives were admitted to the inner court, and Anna was lifted carefully from the saddle, and placed in her mother’s

arms, on a rude bench in the corner allotted them of the dimly-lighted and disorderly retainers' hall, which at present served as a sort of guard-room. In five minutes a stout knight of some fifty years of age, armed fully except his casque, entered the hall.

"I trust, Jew, you have reason for this midnight disturbance," said Sir Adolf: "I particularly object to losing two hours' rest for nothing."

"We are pursued, noble knight, by a party of Count Eberhard's riders: my horses have left them far behind; but they are not like to slacken their steps or turn back when they have spoil in view——"

"And where they see a Jew they know there must be booty," interrupted the knight, with a coarse laugh. "And how many are there?"

"Some dozen only, that I saw; but, as the guard at the gates knew that we were coming to your excellence, they may have called out others to join them."

"And Eberhard cares little whom his vassals rob, so he gets his share of the spoil. So ho, there!" he shouted, with a heavy stamp of his mailed foot: "up, and to your saddles!" The sleepers around started at the well-known sound, and, snatching up spear and casque, hurried into the court.

"I cannot spend time to be beleaguered in this old den," said the knight. "Get you on in advance, Jew, with your household and treasures. You are safe, while my right arm is; for the man has yet to be born who can say that Adolf of Weinsperg ever failed in his word to Pope or Pagan."

Once more the fugitives are in the saddle; once more the Jew grasps the rein of the docile Arabian, to whose sagacity and courage he intrusts the young girl of a strange people, beneath whose soft eye his own glance wavers as it never wavered beneath that of an enemy; again the encouraging word in Arabic is uttered, and again the fleet steeds dart

onward like the wind, with a motion as easy as it is rapid. Occasionally Ozias paused to listen for sounds in the rear, but at last halted his party upon an eminence whose brow was crowned with an ancient grove of dense verdure.

"We can proceed no farther with safety," he said to Elizabeth. "Before the dawn we should reach a fortified town, through which we must pass; and, the safe-conduct being but for four, I must consult with Sir Adolf the means of accounting for the fifth, or all our toil were wasted. Here we may rest free from danger, and watch the result of the pursuit below."

The women were lifted from the saddle to rest their wearied limbs; the horses were secured so that they might browse along the edge of the wood. Soon the cadenced step of the troop-horses reached them, echoing through the valley; and then followed a more hurried and less regular motion of the party under the command of the inexperienced esquire. The moon was now clear, and Ozias could discover that Sir Adolf intended to confront the vassals of Wurtemberg. He trembled; but it was with rage that no mail might grace his breast, no lance gleam in his hand; that he must stand ignobly by, and see those mercenary riders, with feelings and intellects scarce beyond those of the brutes they bestrode, endowed with the privilege to fight for the shivering beings whom he so desired to guard. His travels, his adventures, his dangers, had imbued his heart with a wild daring, a love of action which devoured him. No Crusader following the fervid eloquence of Peter the Hermit, no Saracen sweeping over the burning sands of Syria in the train of Nouredin or Saladin, was ever stirred by a keener sting of ideal glory and self-immolating enthusiasm, than the Hebrew trader, chained to the slavish paths of traffic.

"To every one his weapon," he muttered, bitterly, between his clenched teeth: "to the Christian iron, to the Jew gold!"

Burning with these thoughts, he hurried half-way down the hill, amid the exclamations of his amazed followers; but his habits of cool thought and deliberate action regaining the mastery, he turned and walked quietly back.

"Now, the God of our fathers be praised, who hath not left thee blindly to break from his guidance, my dear young master," said the elder of the two serving-men. "Why wouldst thou rush among the men of war, among the strong armor and the sharp spears, to be broken as the potter's vessel is broken in pieces? Surely, if the ravening Gentiles go down to the battle and rend each other for the gold which thy hand holds forth to them, it is for thee to stand aside, while he whom thou payest to do thy bidding shall make thy path safe."

"Peace, Reuben!" was the only reply of his master, as Anna looked on with bloodless cheeks and dilated eyes; but her mother arose, and, placing her hand quietly and firmly upon his arm, said, "Your servant is right: your hand hath no weapon, your breast no mail; and if a spear-thrust lay you low, what becomes of us, whose sole hope is in you?"

"The Lord can break the arm of the wicked and the evil man, and shield the heart of such as fear him. Lady, I must not be stayed."

Elizabeth released her grasp. Ozias sprang into the saddle, and, riding to the side of Adolf of Weinsperg, who had just drawn up his men for the expected rencontre, he said, aloud—

"Noble knight, your pursuers are now near enough for you to judge of them: are they more than yourselves?"

"By one-third," replied the old soldier, bluntly. "And what then?"

"Then," resumed the Jew, "I will give a month's pay to each of your band, according to his rank, if you prove victorious." And, without another word, he reined back his horse to the edge of the wood that skirted the road.

Sir Adolf gave a long whistle, which, being interpreted, meant, "Can so much good come out of Israel?" and a gentle rattling of armor showed that the proposition was appreciated by his followers.

The Jew had barely withdrawn, when the pursuers appeared, and their leader sent to demand a conference with Sir Adolf of Weinsperg.

"I will grant it, as I am somewhat curious to know what excuse can be made for pursuing me, a free knight of the Empire, travelling under the Emperor's seal and upon his business."

With these words he put his horse into a sharp trot, and, reaching the centre of the two lines, awaited the approach of Count Eberhard's adventurous esquire. "I have the honor to be followed by an esquire of Count Eberhard of Wurtemberg, as I understand," was his remark. "Are such the orders of the count?"

The dry tone of the question made the young man feel his mistake; but, fully conscious of his master's favor if he succeeded, he answered, boldly enough, "It was my duty, noble sir, to arrest certain fugitives who have escaped from Esslingen this night against his will."

"And on what pretext do you call on me to account for such fugitives?"

"One of them stated at the gates of the city that he was coming to your protection."

"A bold, and, it strikes me, a somewhat unusual, step for persons who are attempting an escape. Did you see those persons?"

"No."

"What do you know of them?"

"I am satisfied that there are two women with you, one of whom Count Eberhard would have detained at the risk of life."

I dare not return without them. Let me see their faces, and I can convince you."

"And can the count find no more discreet errands for his young men than flying by night after Jewesses?" returned Sir Adolf, with a provoking laugh. "I had thought him a more dutiful son of the Church than that."

"Jewesses! Good sir, let me see them."

"You overstep the privileges of your age and rank, boy. It should be sufficient that you know who I am, to satisfy you that I shield no persons under my banner without due authority. The party I permit to travel under my protection are Jews."

"But the women!—the women are Christians: the man only is a Jew."

"Is the boy mad?" shouted the old knight, fairly exasperated. "Who ever heard of Christian women consorting thus with Jews? You insult the mother that bore you."

"By Saint Francis! by Saint Dominic! by the three kings!" stammered the baffled esquire, "what shall I say?"

"Say nothing more, young man, but face about, get home as soon as you can, and stay there with your mother and sisters until you acquire more discretion."

Between spur and bit, Rupert was now driving his horse as wild as he himself was.

"Have I the permission of the esquire of the most noble Count Eberhard of Wurtemberg to continue my journey?" asked Sir Adolf, after a slight pause.

"Worthy knight, as you value the count's friendship, let me again entreat you to permit me to satisfy you that you are deceived in these people."

"Young man, I do *not* value the count's friendship the point of my lance or the rowel of my spur: he's a brave man, therefore I make no less comparisons. But if he has no better warders than will permit the women he chooses should stay, to

run off from a fortified town by night, he deserves that all the women should run away; and, in that case, it is my opinion he'd give the citizens their town again."

And here the knight laughed, having talked himself into a better humor. Rupert thought to take advantage of it.

"But you do not know these women, sir: they are as rich as Jews, and as cunning."

"Then you may be sure, if I had them, I should find those two sufficient reasons for keeping them. But, I tell you plainly, you are wasting my time and your own breath. The people who are travelling under my escort have your master's safe-conduct: would you dare to violate it? And, for my part, they have my word, which I value more than all the ink or wax ever spread on paper: be they Jew or Gentile, Christian or Pagan, honest folks or thieves, they go with me to any spot between this and Nuremberg. And so, youth, if you've any experience in discovering when an old soldier is in earnest, you'll go back to your master, and let him teach you a little better discipline than you've displayed this night."

Rupert was desperate. "I may as well be slain here as go back to my death," he said to himself; "the count will forgive any thing and every thing so long as his fancy lasts, if I take the girl back; and, if not, he would murder me equally for following or not following her."

"Sir Adolf," he replied, with all the composure he could summon, "I am very sorry to offer violence to your gray hairs——"

The old knight interrupted this ultra courtesy with a loud laugh.

"But I will not return until I have at least seen these women——"

"And the Jew's gold," again interrupted Sir Adolf:

"your master has trained you well in that respect. You're as stanch on the track of a Jew as a wolf after carrion."

"My men outnumber yours——"

"As curs outnumber lions," persisted the persecutor.

"Look to yourself, then!" shouted the esquire, shaking his clenched hand in youthful fury. "Whatever we are, Eberhard of Wurtemberg is not so despicable."

"I have quarrel enough with the count already, and care not how soon I meet himself; but I know my trade too well to spill blood to no purpose. I don't want your life, boy; but, if I must needs give your master a lesson through you, why, have at you."

With these words, he saluted his young antagonist with mock gravity, and rode slowly and composedly back to his men. Rupert's horse equally expressed the state of his master's mind by the curvets, demi-voltes, and other misplaced performances with which he retraced his steps.

The Free Lances meantime had been in no slight dismay at the protracted conference: a month's pay for a skirmish was too rare a chance to see perilled with composure. A glance from their leader showed them that their fears might be dismissed: they answered it by gathering up their reins and settling themselves more firmly in their saddles. Sir Adolf generously gave his inexperienced foe an opportunity to draw his men into fighting-order, but at the same time, watching him with the eye of a hawk, he secured to himself every due advantage, and thundered down upon him ere he could give the word to charge. In the rear of the knight followed a milk-white steed and his rider, like phantoms about to fade away with the gray mists that announced the dawn.

With that entire recklessness of personal safety which so often proves the surest shield, Ozias threw himself into the thickest of the fray: his Arabian, trained to aid the rider with teeth and heels, and intelligent of the slightest turn of

the hand or pressure of the limbs, was better as offence or defence than spear or buckler. Lithe and muscular as a panther, many a burly rider did his long and sinewy arms drag to the ground, while he himself, thrown at need along the side, or beneath the belly of his horse, seemed to vanish from the sight of his assailants. A panic finally seized them, as their weapons fell harmlessly through (as it seemed to them) this unearthly foe. A material enemy they would have resisted to the last; but how fight against the devil?

Adolf of Weinsperg was indebted to the unarmed Jew for a reputation that served him through the rest of his life better than any coat of mail, though it had been forged by Vulcan, and tempered in the waters of Styx.

"This comes of meddling with Jews," grumbled a dogged ritter, as he found himself on the ground. More fortunate than some of his mates, he secured his horse, and had just remounted, when a blow fairly laid over the helm of the young esquire by Sir Adolf, whom his pertinacity had wearied out of forbearance, sent Rupert reeling out of his saddle. The stout trooper caught him as he was falling, and, drawing him across his own horse, gladly seized the chance to give the signal for retreat, by shouting that their leader was down. But, as they turned, one, more daring or less credulous than his fellows, dealt a farewell blow at the phantom which had so perseveringly hovered around them. How successful it was, he did not linger to discover; but, as the last of his foes disappeared, Sir Adolf perceived the white horse riderless and motionless, and, on approaching, found him protecting the senseless body of the Jew.

"He has done good service," said the knight, although it must be owned that he had not beheld his unarmed ally's manœuvres without a thrill of superstition; "here; some of you go and send his people to him."

The two Israelites sped down the hill to their master's aid.

They had skill enough to see that life was not yet extinct, and slowly and tenderly they bore him back from his ill-starred expedition, and laid him, all pale and bloody, at the feet of the women for whom he had thus suffered. Anna was conscious of a sharp pang, a blindness; and then she knew no more.

* * * * *

Let us advance some three years, and enter the court of Charles IV. of Germany, where we have already said that Ludmila was an Imperial pet.

The character and career of the Emperor by no means belong to the history of chivalry. But, astute as he was, comprehensive as was his genius, great as were his powers of concentration, the state of the Empire, in its varied and conflicting interests throughout his long reign, tasked his powers to the utmost, and compelled him to stoop to one opponent and feign to another, to blind or baffle them, where his own conscious superiority taught him that he could openly have triumphed had any of those who should have felt that the interests of the Empire were their own possessed the cultivation and freedom from prejudice which characterized his own intelligence.

Placed on the Imperial throne through the intrigues of the Pope, Clement V., and of Philip of Valois, to serve their interests against those of Germany, those restless and wily potentates had thought to retain him as the mere tool of their own contending views. But shaking off the trammels of France with the death of his father, and securing the more useful favor of the Pope, he gave his diplomacy, his learning, and his talents to consolidating and raising the Empire, so shaken and disintegrated by the wretched jealousies and feuds of petty princes. Unfortunately, the great name and example he might have left were marred by his selfish devotion to the advancement of his own family.

The free cities, proud of the liberty which their commercial enterprise and intelligence had won for them, the equals of the nobility in courage, and their superiors in the art of war, lost no opportunity of contending with the disputants for hereditary power. Charles, far-sighted, and sagacious in political combination, appreciated the value of these best ministrants of a nation's true greatness, saw in them the means of spreading order throughout the Empire, and with these views desired to be declared the head of the Hansa. But, unfortunately, the league of the cities could not comprehend him: satisfied and self-relying, they were not aware of the future importance of such an ally; they were not able, like Charles, to examine, to compare and weigh the various interests and resources of a great empire; to penetrate into the effects of the present upon the future, and they justly dreaded his proneness to sacrifice the public dignity to his private interests. Thus interests, which might have been harmoniously blended in the advancement of liberty and intelligence, continued to struggle fiercely and unremittingly for sectional and private motives, inflicting daily wounds upon public and personal prosperity. But for the people, this was better than blind submission, than ignorance of their own powers, than stagnant quietude under the slavery of divine right, hereditary rule, and brutal force. Since our last view of the cities, their power had increased: they had again revolted,—this time successfully—and had formed a coalition sufficiently powerful to humble even the banner of Black, Red, and Gold.


Three years had passed, and beneath the red soil of Franconia slept Liska, the loved and loving wife of Count Otto of Riesenburg. The purple heather wooed the sun and breeze amid the turf that wrapped her gentle breast; the oak leaned over her dead form its trusty and protecting arms, as the blunt but warm-hearted husband had folded his arms around

her living beauty ; the winds breathed kisses as they swept by, and the wild birds among the branches, and the bees among the flowers, sang daily requiems to her who had so loved these guests at Nature's festive board ; for such was her desire. She wished no cowed monk or cloistered nun to count beads above her tomb ; no ponderous hatchments, with armorial bearings, to dignify her place of rest ; no darkness of ancestral vaults to gloom around her memory and her remains : she prayed that her child might kneel by her side beneath Heaven's light, with its pure and strengthening influences to console her, and might thus feel that it was indeed He who gave, who had taken away.

The Emperor was at Ulm. With him, as ever, like battle-axe to hand, was the devoted subject and still stout soldier, Count Otto of Riesenburg ; and Ludmila nestled by the side of the Amazonian Empress, Elizabeth of Poland.

The court was quiet enough now. All the mimic wars of tilt and tournament, all the heavy ceremonial, the Imperial splendors and gay fêtes, to which the heiress of Riesenburg was the fay who lent the chief grace and brilliancy, had ceased. The young knights and esquires had followed the banner of their liege-lords in the Emperor's army, which was besieging Ulm ; staid citizens and foreign traders only were seen in the streets of the great city, and about the castle, women, priests, a few officers of the household, and the small garrison which kept up the formality of protecting it.

On one pleasant morning the Empress sat, with part of her little court about her, in a long, low-roofed apartment of the Heathen Tower. Half a dozen young girls grouped together plied their embroidery busily at one end of the hall, under the superintendence of an elderly dame of rank ; two or three pages, not yet old enough to turn maidens' heads with flattering speeches, were permitted to hover around them with more familiarity than was granted to their elders.



On a platform elevated a few steps above the floor sat the Empress, her white and well-shaped hands, the strength of which was so remarkable as to become matter of record, now occupied in embroidering a surcoat for her royal lord. By her side, assorting her materials, knelt a girl, large and queenly of form, but whose fine features expressed too much softness and timidity for any desire of queenly power or responsibility to lurk behind them. All that was known of her at the court was, that she was called Anna, was under the protection of the Emperor's confessor, Janow, and was immensely rich.

Behind the Empress stood the first lady-in-waiting, chief mistress of all the duties of etiquette and propriety, the Lady Von Eberstein.

On a step of the platform sat Ludmila, her head leaning indolently against the harp around which her arms were caressingly twined. It was her dearest possession, next to the black Bohemian, Eblis—as her confessor, in his pride of Oriental learning, had named the horse sent her by her young betrothed, Albert of Rabenstein; but we must confess that she was by no means so scientific or so skilful in its management: she loved when alone to chant to it long ballads of love and woe, and the fairy-legends which every rock and stream of her native land furnished to the minstrel; she loved at twilight to improvise from its chords strains now measured and martial, now wild and plaintive, as her soul was strong and gay, or sad and uncertain in its musings. But the harp must be her love, not her labor, or its tones would cease to awaken music in her soul.

The most important person in the group was Janow, the Emperor's confessor,—a man whose countenance expressed deep thought, refinement, and sensibility, yet wanted strength; a man fit to pave the way for Luther, by awakening the minds of those around him to reflection, but unequal to inspiring

them to action or guiding them through it. Just in his perceptions, generous in his feelings, his influence over the Emperor had been of a character truly Christian. As this ecclesiastic closed the volume of the Allemanic annals, from which he had been reading aloud for the edification of Elizabeth of Poland and her train, she lifted her eyes and thanked him, in a manner which had in it more of cheerful goodness of heart than conventional dignity and reserve.

Ludmila looked up archly at the Empress and said, —

“Sovereign lady, do you think there will be chronicles written about us?”

“It is very possible,” replied Elizabeth. “But why do you ask, little one?”

“I was thinking how very tedious it would be to hear them read,” replied Ludmila, demurely.

Anna here broke silence for the first time, by exclaiming, “Oh, Ludmila!” in the faintest but most earnest of tones. Ludmila laughed aloud at this sudden expostulation, and the notes were as sweet and clear as those of a bird among the boughs.

“You would like no chronicles but those of young knights, breaking hearts, lances, and heads for ladies’ love, and breathing out sighs into maidens’ ears and their souls out at maidens’ feet, after the fashion of the minnesangers’ fables,” continued the Empress laughingly to Ludmila.

“Not at all, dear lady,” was the reply; “for I think it is very stupid to have young men making silly speeches to one about cheeks and eyes and lips, which mean nothing in the world but, ‘Your father is a great nobleman of the Semperfreien, very rich, and you are his heiress.’”

“The saints be about us!” exclaimed the Empress, with affected horror: “where has the child learned so much wicked worldly wisdom?”

“Since your Majesty condescends to ask the question,” re-

turned the heiress, "I presume I may answer it, even at the risk of disgusting the courtly company around. I think, then, that I may be thankful for whatever worldly wisdom I have, to old Carl, my father's favorite man-at-arms, my best nurse in childhood, and at present my trusty guardian from wolves, Landschaden,* and young lovers."

This sally, and the manner of its utterance, forced a smile from the shy Anna, and even brought something like one to the lips of the severe countess.

"And dost thou expect us to believe, my child, that all the romances which are packed away in this little head have never whispered to thee, 'How charming is love!' or that the picture of a certain noble youth has hung so long in thy bower to no purpose?" said Elizabeth, still affectionately using the *du* of the German domestic intercourse.

At this hint the young countess blushed from her fair throat to her temples. She had not supposed any one was to guess that she was in love.

"Well, well, maiden, don't look so distressed: we are all trusty counsellors here, and old Carl does his duty like any friendly giant of romance. But I think I can understand how it is with thee and such as thee. I absolve thee from desiring to hear all those fine sayings to thy fair face: thy dream of love hath no cloud of self in it. No, no: thy fairy-land is to dare perils, wondrous adventures, sacrifice all worldly good, for the sake of thy Oberon; for such the lord of thy future destiny is to thy fancy. Oh, I shall yet hear of thee, after the fashion of some damsel-errant of Italian fable, clad like a page and wandering, lute in hand, through dark and dreary forests, in search of thy lover, who is pining in chains in some false Paynim's castle-vaults; or in worse, because willing, thralldom, that of some enchantress, beautiful as day, by the aid of wicked

* Robber-knights.

spells; or thou wilt be following him to battle, clad in armor, with spear in hand and falchion at side, mounted upon thy favorite Eblis, and desiring no greater happiness than that the lance meant for him should pierce thy breast, and that then, and no sooner, he should know how thou hadst lived and died, for his glory and his love."

The Lady Von Eberstein stood aghast at this levity, uttered by her Imperial Highness with a voice and manner in which true feeling seemed to lurk warm and bright beneath assumed smile and jest. Poor Ludmila at first listened with a sort of dreamy pleasure to her mistress's raillery; but finally, seeing all those snowy-winged loves, which had nestled so secretly and securely around her heart, thus startled from what she had believed their unsuspected home, her confusion was as painful as it was lovely.

She first held out her hands imploringly to her mistress, and then buried her face in them, without a word: it was odd indeed when the pet's quick wit and brilliant fancy could not parry any and every thrust. Elizabeth had not expected that her random words (founded more on the memory of her own youthful dreams than on any decided opinion of her youthful favorite's extravagances) should strike so deep. She drew her nearer and kissed the flushed brow.

"Others have dwelt a while in such a paradise, my elfin queen," she said, tenderly and sadly; "but, ah me! there is a serpent in waiting at the gate of every earthly Eden. Learn to believe this in time, Ludmila, that you may be prepared to penetrate its loathsome soul through its fair seeming, and to counteract its foul arts by the truth and patience of pure affection."

Ludmila kissed the gracious hand that caressed her, and left a tear upon it: then, arising hurriedly, she retreated to a balcony which overlooked the central court of the castle,

where, after gazing downward a moment, an involuntary exclamation of relief escaped her.

"Ah!" she uttered, with a long-drawn breath, "Carl has brought out Eblis. Now I may ride."

"And you may not ride but by your servant's permission!" said the Countess von Eberstein, in a tone of solemn reproof.

"Not I, indeed," answered the young girl, with a smile. "When my father is absent, nothing less than her Majesty's commands could force Carl to let me have my own way about it, unless it were his way too. Oh, he's a terrible tyrant! and even at this minute, though he sees me here like a hawk trying to cast off her jesses, if Eblis should happen to be in one of his sulky moods, Carl wouldn't let me back him."

"And why?" asked Elizabeth, with her usual interest in her favorite's prattle.

"Because he has a great horror of every thing Bohemian. His father fought under the banner of my grandfather against King Ottocar; and Carl has the most frightful tales to tell of those days. He believes all Bohemians are possessed with evil spirits, more or less wicked. My father says that for a long time Carl expected my dear mother would vanish away suddenly into some tree, or rock, or fountain; he was sure something terrible would happen when I was sprinkled with holy water at my baptism, thinking I was half an elf; but, that being safely accomplished, he gradually grew to believe her entirely human and Christian. But as for my horse, he couldn't be persuaded by all the priests in the Empire that there's not an actual devil in him when he gets in his vicious fits."

"And what does he do with him then, lady?" asked one of the pages, who had drawn near with a lively interest in devils and horses.

"Nothing, but let him run where he will, crossing himself most devoutly, and praying that my pet may break his own

neck, since he may not do it for him. See! the old man don't touch the horse himself, though he stands there to watch the man who takes care of him. 'Tis useless for me to try to persuade him that it is because he struck Eblis when my father first brought him to me: he will believe that some demon from the Böhmerwald is in the habit of making Eblis's four legs carry him about; as if," she added, laughing, "the devil could not travel better by himself!"

"Your light speech savors of heresy, maiden," again interposed the lady-in-waiting. "Did not the holy father Matthias read to us the other day of the devils that went from the men into the swine?"

"And I believe the good lady thinks in her heart that the evil spirit varies his habitation between me and the horse," whispered Ludmila to Anna, who, dismissed from her work, had glided to her friend's side. "But I must see whether I am to ride or not," she continued; and, stepping entirely out upon the balcony, she raised a silver whistle from her side and gave breath to a peculiar note which her father had taught her.

Eblis erected his small ears, and turned his slender muzzle towards the familiar sound, then, wheeling around, raised his forehead high and bent the arms gracefully—the customary salute to his fair mistress, to which he had been trained in the early days of his civilization. Ludmila clapped her hands with as much delight as if she had witnessed the feat for the first time.

"I have your leave to ride, gracious lady?" she said, turning to the Empress.

"I can never be so cruel as to see so wild a bird fret its heart out behind prison-bars," replied her royal mistress, with a kind smile.

"And Anna?" asked the favorite, with a pleading look.

"Yes, under the care of our good knight, Sir Michael von

Wurzen. We cannot trust Carl with the guardianship of two such fair damsels. One of them would assuredly be stolen."

A page was accordingly despatched with her Imperial Highness's orders to Sir Michael. Ludmila and her friend retired to array themselves in mask and mantle, and the little party soon emerged through the dark and ancient gateway, and, under the guidance of Sir Michael, leaving the town by the nearest way, were soon cantering gayly over the gently-undulating country without the walls.

"Now I feel free," said and sang Ludmila.

"And I," chimed in the old ritter at her elbow. "Ah, it would be a better world if they would tear down all these walled towns, that only serve to make cowards, and let every man's hand keep his head."

"And the women?" asked his young mistress.

"There ought not to be more women than the men can protect."

"But what would you do with the rest?" persevered the inquirer.

The old soldier had never thought so far in advance. "There are certainly too many of them for any good," he muttered.

"Which would you prefer, then?" continued Ludmila, laughing, "to sell us to the Turks, or let us learn to do our own fighting?"

"No, no; that would never do," retorted Carl: "you rule us too much already. And as for the Turks, it is my opinion that they have trouble enough with their own women, who are used to being locked up, without ours, who can never keep still."

"Well, then, be content that you can keep some of us shut up in the cities; but I begin to think you would like to sew us up in sacks and throw us into the Danube, you're in such an ill humor."

Truth was that the old trooper, with all his attachment to his lord's daughter, felt himself somewhat ignominiously treated at being left by her side when there were battles to be fought, and his wounded dignity occasionally displayed itself in such ebullitions as we have quoted.

"But the cities are beautiful in spite of our wrath, old friend," said Ludmila, wheeling her horse around upon an eminence, where they could behold the superb city, the pride of the Empire, spread out in all its architectural grandeur; while in the midst the river made its way like a thread of silver wound from some fairy distaff.

Carl pointed grimly to the west, where upon the most elevated range of hills within their prospect the dark, narrow outline of some marauder's fortress reared itself in full relief against the bright blue sky.

"*That* is better than a city," he said, bluntly.

Sir Michael meantime had uttered no word: it had been long since decided of him that he could eat more, sleep more, and talk less than any man in Nuremberg; and on the present occasion he seemed resolute to maintain the latter reputation.

Anna, too, was silent. Her heart was heavy with many a strange, sad care: gentle and loving as was her nature, it was less open than that of her companion, and her troubles, too, were such as she must conceal. So Ludmila, with her wild, poetic impulses all stirred into life by the inspiring influences of nature, whose richest charms seemed to decorate each scene around, gave herself up to musing; and her dreams were of Albert of Rabenstein.

Suddenly Sir Michael halted, and pointed, with an ejaculatory grunt, to the southwest, where a light cloud of dust hovered above the earth, and seemed approaching them.

"News! news!" exclaimed the excitable girl, at once fully aroused from her reverie. "News from the Emperor!—from my dear father! The saints be praised! My father's colors,

too!" again she joyously burst forth, as she beheld the white and red streaming upon the wind. In a moment Eblis had shot far ahead of his companions, and the next instant his fair rider saw the leader of the approaching band urge on his jaded horse, raise his visor as he drew near, lower his lance, and bow to his saddle-bow in salutation. The young countess recognised Sir Henry von Lichtenstein, whom we last met in the wilds of Bohemia as the esquire of Count Otto of Riesenbergh. Thinking only of her father, she held forth her hand mechanically for the token she expected to receive. The young knight—for he had won his spurs—took the tiny fingers and carried them to his lips, with the air of a man who had a right to expect such a favor. Ludmila blushed with vexation, and, withdrawing her hand, said, abruptly,—“My father's letter, sir.”

But Henry of Lichtenstein was not the man to be rebuffed where he had a purpose in view. He chose it should be thought that his liege-lord's daughter had hastened to meet himself personally; and the young girl felt and writhed under the insinuation without knowing how to refute it. He continued to gaze upon her with admiration so warm that the lookers-on might easily interpret it into permitted love, while presenting the missive she expected. Without even a look at the young knight, she cut the silken strings with her dagger, and read it with the most childlike eagerness.

“I am well, my little one, my heart's treasure,” it said, “but heartily tired. These boors of citizens give us more trouble than a man of birth likes to confess. Write to me; tell me that you are well, and as happy as you can be without your old father, who hopes to see you again. Perhaps I should not, could I have had my own way yesterday. We had made a breach in the walls, when a party of these dogs came out upon us, with a fellow at their head who ought to be a knight. What blows he dealt! I was hot with rage and

shame as I saw my best men fall right and left before him. I tried to meet him, but he avoided me: I shouted, I defied him; but he only shook his head and kept out of my way. I tried afterwards to find out who he was by some prisoners we had taken; but no one in the city knows him. Though he is one of their most trusted leaders and counsellors, they call him simply HABENICHTS, for no other name will he give them. It is very like if he had given me the combat that he would have cleft my skull, as he did for so many others; for I am not so young and strong as I have been.

"You will ask the Empress to permit you to kiss her hands for me.

"Carl must take care of you well. Tell the faithful old fool that I need him greatly, but I am happier to have him with you. Henry of Lichtenstein has behaved well; and our good lord the Emperor permits him the honor of bearing his letters."

Ludmila here turned to the young knight, and said, with no slight touch of sarcasm in eye and voice,—

"My father says you have behaved well, sir. I wonder that you should leave a place where you earn honors so readily."

"A faithful knight may not refuse even the humblest duties required in the service of his liege-lord," replied Sir Henry, as if unconscious of the sarcasm: "it is an honor to serve the Emperor in the least desire. And," he added, expressively, "there are pleasures which make us forget glory."

The rest of the party now came up, and Carl resumed his wonted place at his lady's side, like a faithful and sagacious dog who thinks his charge is in suspicious company. Anna had replaced the mask which she had thrown off in the first eagerness to watch the approaching band: she had always avoided the young knight: his looks displeased her. Ludmila

continued to peruse her letter devoutly. Sir Michael was the only one who expressed any thing like cordiality; and, as he did not value the difference between a man and his horse, there was no great comfort in this. Thus the party pursued their way to the city.

Without true dignity of mind or noble ambition, Henry of Lichtenstein was eager for that worldly aggrandizement, which all vulgar and selfish minds desire when continually viewing the importance it bestows on others; while his patience, his persistence, in pursuing these aims, his quickness in perceiving and his aptness in using every step which might advance them, were, fortunately, uncommon. Such a person was necessarily incapable of seeing much good in others, and, naturally enough, suspicious of their opinions and manners towards himself. But his craft was veiled by an affected simplicity; his selfishness, by a bland deference to his superiors and a courtesy to his equals, with which even those who doubted their soundness could not well find fault. There were, however, three persons with whom he found his views baffled. Old Carl, the rough and honest trooper, knew him thoroughly, and detested him accordingly. Ludmila, despite her early associations and her father's preference, looked on him with a lofty indifference, only now and then aroused into vexation by the insinuations described. With Anna the case was still worse. The serpent's eye, the serpent's hiss, the serpent's coil, arose before her in his every glance, tone, and motion; and, without being naturally very imaginative, all she possessed of that gift seemed to direct its mysterious activity against Sir Henry.

On re-entering the castle, the two girls hurried to their apartments; Anna, to think mournfully over a father so strangely lost, and a lover, not indeed acknowledged by that name, not asking for that hope, yet holding something of a lover's sway.

At long intervals and with extreme caution, the wife and daughter of Lewis met their Jewish preserver. He had saved for them the greater portion of the merchant's wealth, and came at intervals to render an account of his stewardship to the widowed Elizabeth. A tone, a glance, were sufficient to awaken and keep alive in his heart hopes which were in themselves a martyrdom—hopes of a hopeless love.

Ludmila, meantime, sat with her father's letter clasped in her hands; her eyes riveted upon the portrait of Albert of Rabenstein. The face which seemed to bend upon her a gaze half melancholy, half tender, might well excuse her dreams. Albert, as represented by the court painter whilst at the University of Prague, was but little changed from what we last saw him: singularly tall he was, and his frame well developed in the mountain-life he had chiefly led, and the manly exercises to which his preceptor had inured him: his fine features had acquired a firmer cast; but the dark hair hung in the same graceful waves around the low, thoughtful brow, the soul looked from the eyes with the same frank sincerity, and over all played the same light of young enthusiasm which had formerly relieved the pensive, and somewhat sombre character of his face.

"Will he love me as I love him? Will he love me at all?"

She arose and stood before a mirror, gazing on the face and form which there met her view with a grave simplicity, as if criticizing the beauty of another. We cannot blame her that the doubt fled before the radiant azure eyes which answered her inquiring glance, the bright chestnut curls which danced so gayly over the polished cheek, and the arch smile which parted lips curved like the bow of Eros, and as full of spirit and resolve as they were of beauty.

During this time Sir Henry, dusty and wayworn as he was, had been ordered to the presence of the Empress, who, after

listening to the perusal of his missives by the royal confessor, had still detained the messenger to ask a thousand questions of her husband's health and looks and labors, of the state of the siege, of the prowess of individual combatants, and of every thing, indeed, which curiosity could suggest to vary the monotony of her life.

To all her interrogations the young knight replied with true courtly tact. Nevertheless, while availing himself to the utmost of so favorable an opportunity, he was inwardly full of impatience for the reappearance of Ludmila: he especially desired her to see the consideration with which the Empress honored him; and here, like most intriguers, he woefully misled himself, from his incapacity to understand an honest spirit. Could her royal mistress have raised Henry of Lichtenstein to her throne, she would in no degree have raised him in the estimation of the young countess.

While the knight thus deluded himself with the belief that he was securely, if slowly, pursuing his well-planned course, another traveller had entered Nuremberg, from a widely different point of the compass, and commissioned on a subject destined to throw him still farther from the thoughts of the lady of his hopes.

This was Bercthold, the household minstrel of Zahera of Rabenstein, and the medium of the occasional communications which passed between Count Otto and his ancient brother-in-arms. The young countess loved the old Bohemian for his own sake, and for the sake of his calling,—which she frankly avowed; but most she loved him for the sake of his young lord; and that point of her preference she kept concealed. She received him with almost filial care and regard, ordered every thing she could think of for his refreshment, and then, after serving him with her own hands to choice wine and delicate viands, placed herself on a low stool by his

side, and waited until he was sufficiently refreshed to declare his tidings.

Berethold was singularly slow in commencing his revelations, after learning that the count was absent. He brought no letters,—only words from the Baron to the Lord of Riesen-berg; and these he seemed to think it useless to deliver to his daughter. After long coaxing on her part and evasion on his, the young girl's affectionate pertinacity conquered the old man's hesitation: he had watched, too, the frequent glances which Ludmila, from habit, directed towards the portrait; watched the warm color that mounted to her cheek when she met his eye at such a moment; and felt convinced that her heart would be in his story. So the story was told; and she learned with equal surprise and dismay that there was a terrible estrangement between the Baron of Rabenstein and his son, or, rather, a strange and unnatural aversion of the son to the parent, whose sole earthly hope was in his heir; that this was fostered by a Dominican monk, who entirely guided the reason and affections of Baron Albert, and that under such influence the young nobleman had declared his resolution to join the Knights of St. John.

Here the old minstrel's voice trembled, and Ludmila, pale almost to death, lifted, unconsciously, a reproachful glance to the inanimate canvas above her.

The anxious Berethold observed it.

"No, dear lady, no," he hurriedly interposed: "you must not blame him. It is evil counsel: it is his evil destiny."

"You speak riddles, good Berethold."

The minstrel sighed heavily.

"It is a world of riddles," he said; "and this is a mystery which God has seen fit to permit; and he only can solve it. This monk, whom no one understands, increases the mischief between my young master and the baron: it is he who has trained him into this resolution to take the vows of the

Hospitallers,—those vows of celibacy which are so contrary to my lord's hopes, so cruel to all his feelings; for Baron Albert is the last heir of his line, the only one to transmit all the honors which so many brave ancestors have won. And we tremble, those of us who love both, we tremble at the terrible fits of passion into which my young master's obstinacy throws the baron; we tremble lest he should commit some violence—and a blow—Oh, by that he would lose his son forever."

Ludmila had already forgotten herself in this recital. Encouraged by her interest, Berethold proceeded with more confidence:—

"Oh, I know them both so well. Baron Albert says so little; but he turns pale, and his face seems to grow cold and hard, while he listens, and his eyes open wider and wider, till they seem to stiffen in his head. I am old and weak, and these things disturb my life too much."

The faithful old servitor here bent his head to conceal the tears that dimmed his glance. The countess took his hand soothingly, and entreated him to go on.

"And that stern, intriguing monk stands ever by, and as he sees my lord muster his entreaties, his arguments, his anger, I have caught his eyes flashing with such fearful gleams, that I sometimes think he must be a devil, who has power to tempt both father and son to ruin."

The listener crossed herself, shivering: she thought Berethold's suspicion must be right.

"And so, lady, my lord in his distress has sent me, whom he can trust, to your father,—has sent me to entreat him, by all their past friendship, their vows of brotherhood, by all that they have suffered and enjoyed together, to come to his relief."

"Oh, how gladly would he go! But, you see, he is at Ulm with the Emperor; and who knows when those rebel citizens

may surrender? And he loves Albert so well——” Here the firmness she had so earnestly striven to maintain failed her, and a flood of tears came at once to her relief,—and to her shame.

The old minstrel laid his hand paternally upon the fair young head which drooped so suddenly before him.

“Kind, noble heart!” he said.

“I am a fool!” said Ludmila, impetuously. “Oh, if my father were here, he would teach this—this young lord how the heiress of Riesenbergh is to be treated!”

“Lady, dear lady,” exclaimed Berethold, in alarm, “listen a little longer to the old man’s words, to his hopes, to his counsel. Look!” and he pointed to the portrait: “all which that seems, young Albert is—brave, generous, devoted—yet so different from others of his age and rank that few can understand or value him. You can do so, I am sure: you can save him. And—trust me, who have watched him from his infancy—he is worthy even of you.”

The young girl’s lip curled.

“But it seems he does not think me worthy of him.”

“Not so, not so: this crafty shaveling has led him to believe that there is no honor, no salvation, but in the priesthood—has taught him that women are to be shunned as the one great curse. You cannot well comprehend this; but such have been his lessons from childhood, instilled by one whom he loves and reverences. Could he see you, hear you, ah, then, how would we triumph!” he continued, exultingly.

The impulsive girl smiled proudly in answer to his tone and look.

“But it was not for your father only that I came,” continued Berethold: “it was to beg that he would bring you with him, as the last hope, to save his child.”

He extended his trembling hands towards her, as if pleading for his own life.

"But my father is absent," Ludmila replied. "It is all useless now, whatever he might have thought it well to do."

"Yes, it is all useless now," repeated the old man, mechanically. And, dropping his head upon his breast, he sat with closed eyes, like one in utter despair.

"Father," his young hostess at last resumed, timidly, "the Empress loves me: she is good and kind. You shall see her; you shall tell her all this. Perhaps she may think of something to serve you. This monk, you say, is a Dominican. The vicar-general of that order is here: he may remove this man—release Albert from his sway."

Berethold shook his head. "There is but one power to change the young baron,—the power of love."

"Nevertheless," persisted Ludmila, "we will talk to the Empress. But now you must rest. You are weary, both heart and limbs. Carl, whom my father left behind to take care of me, shall care for you too. He has a gentle heart, though his ways are rough; and to-morrow—" she paused, with a bright smile—"to-morrow we will hope all this wrong may be made right."

In her character of spoiled favorite, Ludmila gained early access the next morning to the Empress, whose attention was immediately arrested by the unusual sight of pale cheeks and tear-swollen eyes.

"Well, my fairy," was her greeting, "I have heard of the arrival of your Bohemian bard. Pray, what news does he bring to change you so? Has some water-nymph enticed the handsome betrothed into her favorite stream? or has some mortal fair one brought him to the resolve of taking two wives, like the good Count von Gleichen, of pious memory?"

Fearful of losing courage, the young girl hastened to pour forth her woes into the bosom where she knew she should find sympathy.

"I love you, my child," the Empress said, tenderly, when

Ludmila had concluded her recital : "I will see this minstrel, in whom you think you can so certainly confide."

"Ah, I do not think : I feel !" replied the favorite, with the impetuosity of a daughter of the East, rather than the reserve, the submission, of her own clime and people.

Berethold entered the presence of Imperial power for the first time, not with the lowly aspect, the real or prepared humility, usual, but rather as if he had summoned all his native loftiness of character, and the privileges and dignity of his calling to do honor to his royal mistress. His eye sparkled with even more than its ordinary light as he enveloped her face with his keen glance to learn her character, ere he bent his aged head reverently before her high estate.

The Empress was pleased to observe this generous independence in such a one as the old minstrel : she was pleased—as what woman worthy of deference would not be?—to receive a homage paid to herself rather than to her rank. Berethold repeated to her all she had once heard from Ludmila ; but it was not so much that she wished to hear, as to gather from his honest affection and simple garrulity a just opinion of the head and heart of the young Baron of Rabenstein. As to his report of Father Cyrillus, she could separate the prejudices of the simple Bohemian from the actual merits of the Dominican, to which his eulogies of Albert's high qualities bore sufficient testimony.

Still, there was a mystery about this man, who devoted himself so tenderly to the son, while he detested, according to Berethold's account, the father. Of this fact, which he so firmly believed, the old man could offer nothing that an impartial judge would have received as proof : he could only make assertions. It was plain enough, however, that he believed all he said ; and to the good Empress there was sufficient internal evidence that a minister of religion, a professed servant of God, who possessed such control over young

Albert, yet saw this terrible, this unnatural contest between his parent and himself, without ending it, must foment it.

"And you think that your young lord might be reconciled to the Baron, his father, could this monk be removed from him?" she inquired.

"Ah, gracious lady, I dare not say," replied the minstrel: "but surely not were he removed by any violence. Could he be withdrawn for a while under pretext of business, something might be done—that is, if my young master could have sight of this flower of Franconia," he added.

"One thing at a time, good Berethold. I have sent for one with whom rests the power to comply with the first suggestion."

The Vicar-General of the Dominicans was here announced. Berethold gazed with an agitating curiosity upon him, as holding in his hands the fate of a man on whom he looked with awe and reverence, despite his dislike.

"To rule Father Cyrillus," he thought, "one must be greater than Father Cyrillus."

But the longer he gazed and listened, the more difficult he found it to give a practical assent to his own theory.

The vicar-general was a man by nature hard, unsympathetic, tyrannical; and his face expressed all this. His harsh gray eye seemed ever to be wandering around, like that of the vulture, in search of prey; his nose had a formidable curve; and his thin, rigid lips seemed like iron portals to his soul. Over all a practised blandness was thrown, which only served to render the actual character more alarming and repulsive.

Without being able to account for it, Berethold began to feel as if he had committed some fatal error; nor was he reassured by what followed after the Empress had repeated his relation to the churchman, who listened with grave attention, requesting now and then a pause, during which he carefully jotted down certain particulars in his tablets. Having re-

ceived all that she could communicate, the holy father turned the cold light of his eyes upon the minstrel, and for a minute or two examined his countenance in silence. Berethold met the glance with one as steadfast: had he been classical, he would have thought himself like Prometheus undergoing the gaze of the vulture which was about to devour his heart; but, being familiar only with the Germanic and Slavic lays and legends, his best comparison was that of a woeful nightmare: he had even a sudden impulse to cross himself, from which ill-placed act of piety, however, he wisely refrained.

As subtle as numerous were the questions with which this head of the Pope's most duteous servants plied the unsophisticated Bohemian: of one-half of them none but a churchman could have divined the possible utility or bearing. The Dominican's entire course of life was explored: his teachings and government of his flock, his administration of the communion, his food even, were inquired into. The books he read were the next subject; but here, fortunately, Berethold, who felt at each successive question and reply like a fly around whom some grisly spider was weaving more and more closely its fatal meshes, could show himself hopelessly ignorant.

"Be of good cheer, my son," he said to Berethold, as he took his leave: "we will rescue this youth from the hands of the unfaithful servant whom the enemy of mankind has found in the midst of the fold of the blessed patron St. Dominic. But remember," he continued—and here for the first time his eyes emitted a positive expression, while he paused upon the word—"remember that all which has been spoken to-day in this gracious presence is to be forgotten. And you, fair daughter," he continued, approaching Ludmila, and laying his hands in benediction upon her head. They were not removed instantaneously, as the thoroughly faithful servitor of Albert of Rabenstein observed: he ob-

served, too, that the expression of the churchman's whole countenance had assumed a very different character from that which had just lowered upon himself; and he shivered with internal rage at this discovery. Then, recognising the lofty temporal position of the Empress, by bestowing on her a blessing less familiar, though full of spiritual fervor, the monk departed. A last glance, caught and interpreted only by the minstrel, fell upon the beautiful daughter of Count Otto the Stormy.

"Ah!" said the wild Bohemian to himself, with a long-drawn respiration, "you are not altogether insensible, though you would have us believe so."

"You may rely securely on what the good vicar has said," resumed Elizabeth. "He will find some reason for calling this monk of his order from Bohemia and placing him where he can do no further harm."

"Pardon my boldness, royal lady, but that is not enough. Baron Albert will be governed by the injunctions, the wishes, of Father Cyrillus, though he be absent. If absent too long, he will go in search of him, or, what is most likely, go with him, wherever he may be ordered. Some stronger influence, some overruling power, some native mastery of the heart, equally devouring and insinuating, which shall at once banish the dry, monkish precepts that have been governing the head, must be exerted upon him."

The Empress turned smilingly to the young countess. "Your old friend is both politic and poetic; but how is this miracle to be achieved? You are neither enchantress nor fairy queen,—though I love to call you the last. We must await the motions of the good father."

The poor girl carried her hand to her eyes, in the endeavor to repress the tear that she felt starting: there was a moment's painful pause, and then the unreasonable favorite of nature and fortune flung herself upon her knees, and buried her face

in the robe of her royal mistress. The kind-hearted lady was perplexed and distressed.

"What would you have, Ludmila?" she endeavored to speak somewhat sternly.

"My dear, kind mistress!" And here fresh sobs prevented further explanation.

"Well?"

The word meant nothing; but the tone was encouraging, and brought the suppliant to a new point in her bewildered and bewildering contemplations. She strove with all her force to check her tears, and then, with desperate resolution, said,—

"Royal lady, let me go with Bercthold!" Elizabeth dropped against the back of the strait and ponderous chair she occupied, fairly stricken with amazement; and, at the same time, Bercthold, with a glance of rapturous gratitude at the courageous girl, fell on his knees to second her efforts.

"I told you so yesterday," said the Empress, at last. "See now, what your father's whims of making girls as free as boys will bring him to! I wish he had cased you in armor and taken you to the wars with him!" And she gave a sigh, that was almost a groan, over the responsibility with which she was encumbered.

But the ice was broken; and the young heiress, having once started down the stream of romantic frenzy, was the last person in the world to turn back, or permit herself to be held by any means short of chains and dungeons.

"But no one shall know it save your Majesty and Bercthold."

"Your father, mad child! your father!" expostulated the Empress, with quite a despairing accent.

"My father is Count Otto the Stormy, and has always said that I am very much like him: so that if I do persist in having my own way here, by way of proving the resemblance,

he can't well blame me. Besides, he himself taught me to—to——" Here the speaker found herself on dangerous ground, and paused, blushing and abashed.

"And you would really think it befitting a damsel of noble birth to pursue such a course?"

"Does God care less for me than for the lowly?" returned the favorite. "Dear lady, Berethold came here in safety, and in safety I can surely return with him. The secret will rest with us three."

"Alas, my child, such secrets reveal themselves. Who can be deceived when looking on these cheeks, these hands—on this high bearing, too? And how to account for your absence from the court?"

"I can be gone to my own home."

"The child of Count Otto of Riesenberg would be little likely to depart on such a journey by stealth and with one feeble follower."

"Send me, then, to the Convent of St. Mary, with your orders that I am to remain there until I return:" rejoined the persevering girl.

"This is madness, child—utter madness! Give over, or I shall be angry with you."

"Consider, gracious lady, I might have gone without your leave; but I would not be so ungrateful for all your kindness and indulgence. Something at my heart tells me it is right that I should take this journey, strange as it may seem. When the father of my betrothed lord sends to me in his distress, how can it be wrong for me to respond to his call?"

"Foolish, headstrong girl! You will drive me to keep you a prisoner in your own apartments."

"For Heaven's sake, no, lady, or I should break my neck to regain my freedom!"

"Upon my soul, I believe you would risk it!" returned the Empress. She waved the minstrel to retire.

"And is this young man—or rather his portrait—so very near your heart, my fairy?" she asked, when the door had closed behind the Bohemian.

"Near as my life!" replied the young girl, passionately.

Elizabeth leaned her brow upon her hand and sat for some moments in thought. She knew how warm was the affection Count Otto felt for the young Albert—how anxiously he looked to this projected union. She weighed and reweighed all Berethold's recital ere she again spoke:—

"Ludmila, you will go to the widow Elizabeth, the mother of Anna. She has a dwelling in the city, I think. Tell her all that has passed in this matter; tell her that you have my leave to do as you will. Under the shelter of her roof you can escape observation. Go, my child; and remember that my anxiety for you will be great,—great for your father, lest harm come to you."

Touched by her mistress's solemnity, Ludmila knelt and covered her hand with grateful kisses, then hastened to take counsel with the old Bohemian.

At set of sun that evening an old man, and a boy carrying a harp, rode through the gate of the Imperial city of Nuremberg.

At the same hour Henry of Lichtenstein stood at the casement of his room in the castle, gazing earnestly towards the southeast. Suddenly, from the quarter he watches, a bird appears: its flight is directed to him, and, with wing apparently untired and eye undimmed, it enters and perches itself on his shoulder. His look is anxious, and, for him, excited; yet his hand is steady as he unfastens from its glossy neck a slip of parchment. He unfolds it, and finds within a rude representation of a tower, daubed with red.

A stately dwelling adjoining and communicating with the Church of St. Mary was the earthly tabernacle of the vicar-general of the self-denying order of Dominic; and thither

Sir Henry now directed his steps. Upon the announcement of his name, he was ushered without delay through long, narrow, and tortuous passages, to an apartment so safely retired that it was evidently intended as a retreat from all worldly cares and annoyances. Here sat the vicar, looking but little more genial than in the morning; his white tunic hung around his rigid form like a sheet of frostwork or screen of stalactites.

The table spread before him showed that his guest was expected. On it already smoked dishes of the most esteemed game, prepared with a luxury and skill which the Emperor's table could not boast. The torches, already lighted, kindled the heavy silver flagons with rare and dancing gleams and showed the rich and fiery Burgundy reposing in their depths like liquid rubies.

"You are punctual," he said to Sir Henry,—"as I expected. You lose nothing,—not even time."

The young man was satisfied with the compliment, equivocal as it seemed.

"He who loses time, holy father," he replied, "loses every thing. I must start for the camp to-morrow morning."

"And to-night?"

"To-night our measures must be decided, and also the means for their accomplishment, as far as may be."

He took from his breast the slip of parchment already mentioned.

"This was brought me within the hour by a trusty messenger."

The vicar looked at it.

"You are mysterious enough for a Pope's *nuncio*. The handwriting on the wall was a trifle to this; and I am no Daniel."

"I know nothing of Daniel's walls, father; but these walls are the walls of a prison, and the red color denotes that prison

to be within the jurisdiction of a free city. That free city is Ulm; and I am thus informed that Count Otto of Riesenbourg is now a prisoner to the rebel citizens, and consequently, having nothing else to do, is occupied in convincing them that he is the veritable Count Otto the 'Stormy,'—by which name he is better known than by that of his estates."

"The next point, then, is the daughter?"

"Precisely."

"And you think she cares for you?"

Henry permitted, as it were, a smile slight, yet full of meaning, to part his lips.

"She is accustomed to me," he replied.

The words were vague, but the manner was positive.

"And the betrothed,—the son of that once formidable old dragon, Zahera of Rabenstein?"

"How can she care for him, whom she has never seen? A mere boy, too, scarce older than herself,—of habits and inclinations more monkish than knightly, as I learn. If you knew Ludmila, father, you would know that the man to win her must be one of deeds, not words,—a man quick, bold, resolute,—like her father, but with more brain. A mere gentle dreamer sighing at her feet, and basking in the light of her eyes would drive her mad. Her heart is as tender as her spirit is proud; yet she could endure insult and injury patiently from the man she loved, but not that he should endure scorn or slight from king or kaiser; not that he should pass through life unheralded or unsung. Such a man she could not love."

Henry perfectly understood the woman he described: the only difficulty was that he did not understand Albert nor himself.

The vicar listened to all this with a gravity so profound, that the young knight might have recognised its irony had he not been too much absorbed in deceiving himself.

"Yet this girl has in her apartment a portrait of Baron Albert——"

Henry started.

"To which," continued the agreeable informant, "she pays a devotion far more fervent than to that of the Madonna. Moreover, circumstances induced me this morning to procure clandestinely a sight of it. I did not read in it the character you describe. It is the face of a man full of passionate enthusiasm,—a face of thought, slowly but surely growing into power."

Henry turned pale with anger and jealousy. Still, with his eye apparently intent upon the meat and wine to which he was doing justice, the vicar went on :—

"I agree entirely with your estimate of the Countess Ludmila. I studied her carefully this morning, in an interview to which I was called by the Empress regarding this very youth of Rabenstein. Even without her wealth—of which also I have as high an estimate as yourself—she is very winning; all enthusiasm, too, in friendship and in love; and at the very moment, probably, when you were watching the road from Ulm for this mystic parchment, she rode out of Nuremberg."

"Is that all?" exclaimed the knight, evidently relieved. "I thought, by your introduction, that you were about to say you had married her."

"Not quite all," returned the vicar, putting a delicious morsel into his mouth, and pausing provokingly as he enjoyed its savor, while his listener waited with a brow corrugated by anxiety. "Not quite all," he repeated.

"She was mounted on that unmistakable horse she loves so dearly, and which we might really suppose to be some metamorphosed lover, he is so docile and sagacious for her, and so vicious to everybody else, as I hear. Some pains had been taken to disguise him; for he was nearly hidden by

gaudy trappings. Certainly she never looked so fascinating." And here the philosophic reciter sipped his wine slowly and appreciatingly. Henry breathed hard: had his tormentor been other than a monk, and one of whom he had need, he would have expedited the tale in a manner more martial and decisive than courtly.

"She was attired," resumed the churchman, warming with his theme, "somewhat like a young minstrel. A harp was slung across her shoulders. Her bright chestnut hair was partly concealed under such a hat as the Bohemian peasants wear, but more delicate in material, and ornamented by a feather from the heron's wing: her doublet of blue cloth became her elastic figure admirably, but fitted somewhat too well to her exquisitely-moulded bust to deceive a practised eye like mine; and her parti-colored hose displayed such a leg——by St. Dominic, there's not a finer among all the marbles of the Vatican!"

The young knight's eyes were gradually dilating with rage; and at this climax he cast a glance upon the monk which convinced him that he had prolonged his amusement sufficiently.

"Her skin was stained quite brown, giving even more brilliancy to her arch and penetrating eyes. And, to conclude, she was accompanied by an old Bohemian, the minstrel of Rabenstein."

At the last words, Henry's selfish and violent nature was stung so far beyond all control that he snatched the dagger from his belt, with an expression of inhuman fury in his eyes that caused the monk to rise, and, driving it up to the hilt into the oaken table before him, snapped the rich and heavily-wrought handle and threw it furiously across the apartment into the very face of a painted St. Dominic, who was looking down with reproachful sanctity upon this scene of earthly tumult.

"*Pax vobiscum !*" said the vicar, dryly, after a moment's pause. "I am glad that you have made so decided a disposition of your weapon and exposition of your temper; and, if you are sufficiently composed by your achievement, we will continue our repast and our conversation. You have given yourself some needless trouble; spoiled your dagger and one of Nicholas Wurmser's best paintings at the same time; and all from a superfluity of energy. Take the word of a churchman of long experience, and believe, that of the two extremes of haste and slowness, the latter is, on the whole, the safest."

Henry listened with a lowering brow, but made no reply.

"You are resolved upon securing the heiress of Riesen-berg?"

The young man assented by a look.

"And your expectation is to make the end pay for the means?"

Another affirmative expression.

"Instead, then, of these boyish outbursts of rage, you should have congratulated yourself that the bird is actually flying to your snares. You have a force with you. Are they all men of Riesenberg?"

"By no means. I have always with me a few Free Lances for my own especial service."

"Right. You discover, then, that the daughter of Count Otto—his only child, too—is escaping clandestinely and ignobly from the protection of the Empress: your duty to your liege-lord requires you to prevent a measure so scandalous. That it may be kept a secret, you employ, not her father's vassals, who would recognise her in her disgraceful mummery, but strangers, who will observe only the boy you choose to arrest, and ask no reasons for their orders."

"Father, you know more than you have spoken."

"Amen, my son. And what then? I have said all that was needful for your guidance. Observe that, when I do not

give you all my confidence, neither do I ask all yours. You will learn in time to understand the wisdom of my method. And, now, have you not other business to communicate?"

Henry of Lichtenstein drew from the pouch at his side a narrow slip of parchment and placed it in the hands of his questioner. Upon it were sketched the arms of Wurtemberg, and the motto "The friend of God and foe of all mankind," accompanied by a secret sign. The vicar drew from the bosom of his robe a similar slip, with which he compared the first slowly and carefully.

"Your warrant is correct," he said at last. "Speak on."

"Eberhard, Count of Wurtemberg, commonly called Eberhard the Riotous, deposes me to the reverend Vicar-General of the Dominicans. Four years since there escaped from his city of Esslingen two women,—the elder the wife of a stubborn rebel, Lewis, an Austrian merchant, the younger his daughter. His lordship has of late received reasons for supposing them to have taken shelter in Nuremberg."

"And the merchant himself?"

"Had previously made his way from the city in safety, after its submission to the count; but I was not commissioned to inquire for him."

"I had divined as much. Go on."

"The mother, named Elizabeth, was still a good-looking woman,—active, sensible, and firm; but the daughter, a very swan in grace and beauty, as the count describes her; stately, yet gentle and timid; only fit to glide along peacefully through life——"

"And to that end," interrupted the vicar, "his *serene* highness proposes the oily currents of his own temper."

"I did not inform myself on this point. He has lost, and will pay richly to find her."

"And have you no suspicions?"

"Certainly; but I did not choose to give him the benefit of them, without first communicating with you."

"And the name?"

"Anna."

"Under the protection of Matthew Janow, and of the Empress. Truly, you continue to fly high for an eyas."

"Under the training of such skilful falconers, spiritual and temporal, as the Vicar-General of the holy order of St. Dominic, and the Count of Wurtemberg, one should learn to fly high and strike sure."

The vicar resumed:

"Under the protection of Janow and of the Empress there seems full security; but——" He looked inquiringly at his guest.

"Most reverend father," replied Henry, "Count Eberhard requests you to name your own terms."

"And to use my own means, of course. Can you tell me nothing more of the history of these people?"

"The father had been in youth a soldier; but averse to the rough bustle of war; and, marrying the daughter of a burgher of Esslingen, he himself turned to trade, and became a thriving citizen. In all the dissensions and rebellions he was foremost; his combined wealth and military experience giving him unbounded influence. As I have already said, after the last unsuccessful struggle of the citizens against their lord, he fled, and has not since been heard of. His wife and daughter he left of necessity, and his wealth. His liege-lord, as the father of his people, was desirous to take charge of the two last; but the mother, not understanding the gratitude due for this condescension, fled precipitately with the fair Anna on the very night of their first interview with the count. He's not a bad-looking man, either, even without considering his rank and power."

"And the wealth?"

"All that the merchant's warehouses contained, and the costly furnishing of his house, came into the count's possession; but his gold and silver were spirited away most mysteriously,—for it was quite impossible that the two women could have carried it off about their persons."

'Any thing known of their escape?'

"But this:—and here Sir Henry repeated Rupert's recital of his night's adventure with Elizabeth, her daughter, Ozias, and the affray with Sir Adolf of Weinsperg—"in which he barely got off with his own life, leaving a dozen of his riders to keep guard there until relieved by the sound of that last trumpet you churchmen tell us of. His first thought, he says, on coming to his senses, was that Eberhard would certainly murder him; and, being so much hurt that he did not feel very particular about a few days more or less, he insisted on being carried at once to his master and telling his own story. The count couldn't very well strike him, all pale and bloody in the arms of his men, and only ordered him to get well and make amends, for, on search being made, the birds had undoubtedly flown."

"And the Jew?"

"All the Jews in Esslingen were examined sharply enough; but Rupert could never discover the right one."

"No; for they have as many wiles at their command as the father of evil, who protects them. But, after all, this is but a disjointed tale—this escape of Christian women with Jews, this midnight chase of a reckless boy."

"True; but, as the quarry is in view,—to carry out your own manner,—the rest does not concern us."

"Why? Have you formed any plan for getting this girl from under the safeguard of the Empress?"

"Not yet; but——"

"But you will task your ingenuity to frame one, which it

will cost more ingenuity to carry out, while the best is already devised."

"How?"

"By her association with this Jew."

"But you say 'tis a disjointed tale."

"Give me the materials, and I'll find means to join them."

"There's but one hope—in Rupert's encountering and recognising him."

"Well, the Wandering Jew is met with sometimes: why not this one?"

"And then?"

"The Church admits no communion between Jew and Christian: one ray of light on this, and Anna must be given up to the Church."

"But that would endanger her."

"Not at all. The Jew alone is supposed to be in fault. If it is true that her mother and herself left Esslingen with him, it must have been through witchcraft that he brought them to such degradation. We must be very grateful to this Jew, however; for the citizen's daughter would never withdraw herself from the Empress' shelter. She could weep for a lover, but not act. She is not at all like the damsel-errant of Riesenberg."

Henry turned livid at the allusion.

"You have not told me all," he said, in a voice broken with anger.

"I have told all that you require. Surely some of your people know the route towards the Böhmerwald. It is not love so much that you want, as rank and wealth."

The young knight bit his lip, but made no reply. The vicar resumed:

"As we are met for business rather than pleasure, sir knight, you will pardon me when I say that you had now best *present yourself* before the Empress for an hour or so: it will

be well for you to carry to Count Eberhard some personal information of his lost treasure."

Had Henry of Lichtenstein witnessed the vicar's parting benediction to Ludmila, he would not so readily have assented to this proposition. He found the Empress surrounded by her little court, of whom she only asked that they should be happy. The younger were dancing; the elder listened to song and tale. Anna still sat, gracious yet melancholy, at the feet of her royal mistress. After paying his homage, Henry's first words were to ask the former for her friend. Anna colored; but the Empress replied at once that her favorite had left her in the morning, upon a visit to the city.

"She has, however, left with Anna a letter for her father." Anna raised her right hand to deliver it, and the young man's eyes were riveted by a ring on the forefinger: two serpents, with emerald eyes, sustained between their arched and threatening crests a dove, whose outstretched wings seemed vainly exerted to bear her from her death. It existed in his memory, but in what connection? He continued to gaze absently and anxiously upon it, regardless that Anna was holding the letter towards him. Astonished at this, her eyes followed the direction of his, and also fell upon the ring. Then their looks met: she turned pale beneath that sinister glance, associated thus with this memento of her father; a mysterious horror stifled her; she tried to speak, to say something of Ludmila and the count,—any thing to break the spell of this confused yet too expressive silence; but a hysterical gasp and shriek was all she could utter.

Henry of Lichtenstein seized the moment of confusion which followed to withdraw from the scene, but not before the cool judgment of his royal mistress had decided that some evil secret was concealed, and perhaps still at work, in the young man's mind. Satisfied that he had seen the same ring on the finger of Lewis, the rebel citizen and "child of the

cord," the mystery yet remained to be solved, how this ornament, left with the body of the murdered man in the mountains of Bohemia, could have returned to his daughter at the imperial court. Here was a point in which Henry could take no counsel with the monk: he could not announce himself as an agent of the Vehmegericht. Still, he could mention the ring, and impress on his accomplice the necessity of learning its history.

Meantime, he had done nothing about Ludmila, nor succeeded in discovering if the Empress was cognizant of her evasion or not.

Two men only of his own band could he spare or trust; and yet a third was wanted; for it might be needful to communicate with himself. The vicar could furnish the very third person required. So far all promised well, the young man thought, as with his troop he crossed the drawbridge of the castle of Nuremberg before dawn. He had yet to learn the difference between an old fox and a young one.

* * * * *

The sun was setting when Ludmila, with her old protector rode from the gates of Nuremberg, like one of those fair and fearless dames of the days of Charlemagne, who were accustomed to follow their husbands or lovers, to serve and save them, in sorrow and danger, braving the snares of magicians and their enchanted towers, fierce giants and hostile armies. She smiled as she looked down upon her strange attire and thought over all the tales of old romance so often said or sung to her,—thought how often she had longed to imitate those acts of warm love and wild devotion. This led her back to the yesterday's conversation with the Empress; and a thrill of uneasiness chased away the smile.

"Daughter of my heart," said the minstrel, in a faltering voice, "believe me, that if your generous act is not fully, *gloriously* rewarded, that knife which hangs by your side

shall drink my heart's blood. I swear it! Ah, I know the boy whose first steps I guided, whose first words I taught: I know him, heart and soul."

There was a long silence, unbroken until the minstrel drew up his horse upon the bank of the Pegnitz, which, in the plenitude of power from recent rains, rushed noisily, and almost threateningly, along.

"Here we cross," said the old man, "and yonder," (pointing a little farther up the stream,) "is our shelter for the night."

"For the night!" repeated his companion. "We have but just started: the sunset has not quite faded,—and such delicious nights, too! Ah, good friend, let us continue yet a little longer, and not lose so many pleasant hours."

"The next village is too distant."

The young girl shrugged her shoulders, and a slight frown of childish petulance gathered on her brow. Contradiction was strange to her. The old man smiled. "Ah, fair child," he said, "if we could move on through life as our hearts beat,—never wearying, never pausing,—I would listen to you. But when you think how many fears I must have for you——"

"Pardon me, Father Berthold," interrupted the young girl: "I am a spoiled child; but, believe me, I can obey those who know how to command. So forward."

The minstrel then alighted to examine carefully the state of the rude bridge before which they had halted.

"I do not like this," he said. "It is very well for ourselves to walk over; but as for the horses——" And he commenced another inspection, which concluded with a solemn shake of the head. "Do you know any thing of a ford, dear lady?" he asked.

"Oh, it is all alike while the river-king is in such a rage."

She threw herself from the saddle, and, fastening the bridle of her own steed with that of Berthold's, uttered an

encouraging word in Bohemian. With a snort and a bound, Eblis obeyed the word, as if rejoicing in the permission to bathe his limbs in the rushing waters and contest the pride of strength with them. His companion followed of necessity, and the travellers crossing the bridge rapidly, watched with delight the grace and power with which the vigorous and spirited animals breasted the waves, and made their way surely to the shore. Eblis, all dripping, came to lean himself against his mistress for the customary caress; and, this received, with unusual docility he permitted the minstrel to lead him along. The old man cast a parting glance at the bridge.

"It will do mischief yet," he said. "Some headlong fool will come thundering down the hill-side there, and be upon it and through it before he can cross himself."

Fortunately, the little wayside inn contained no sojourners but themselves: the superior air of the travellers, and their fine horses, commanded respect, and the harp admiration.

The pale gray mists which announce the dawn were but gathering in the sky when the old man aroused his charge from the slumbers of youth and health, and, giving their host treble the value of their entertainment, Ludmila and himself then sallied forth into the invigorating breath of morning. The horses were soon made ready, and the route resumed.

The sun was high in the heavens, when, as if to prove the old Bohemian a prophet, two horsemen came literally thundering down the hill and upon the bridge. Its frail timbers, weakened by age, and shaken by recent floods, tottered beneath the sudden and violent charge, swayed for an instant, and gave way, ere the riders could draw rein. Down into the impetuous waves they fell, involved amid the ruins. At the same moment, a third horseman appeared, moving quietly upon a staid and sober mule; and fortunately his own shouts, *and those* of the sufferers themselves, called some peasants

from a neighboring field. A rescue was effected, though not without broken heads and bruises on the part of the ambitious *ritters*, who were conveyed to the little inn which Berethold and his companion had left some hours previous. But not only did the new-comers find themselves incapacitated by their accident from continuing their route that day, but they also found it impossible to elicit any information concerning an old man and a boy with a harp, who it was thought must have passed that way the previous evening. "How could they have crossed without breaking down the bridge any more than yourselves?" asked the host. The question was sufficiently logical for those to whom it was addressed: so they had no resource but to wait till their sore bones would permit them to resume the saddle; while, to increase their delay, one of their horses had floated down the current with the floating timbers, and was seen no more. Henry of Lichtenstein's troopers swore after the most luxuriant German method; the vicar's emissary crossed himself, and called on St. Dominic for restitution. The first method would probably have proved as effectual as the last, had not the vicar—delicate, perhaps, about intruding too often upon a saint whose duties were already so onerous—provided his servant with the needful worldly means of progress, in the shape of various coins of the Empire.

Meantime, the young countess and her Mentor journeyed on, all unconscious of the danger that followed hard upon their track. When the pursuers were floundering in the Pegnitz, Berethold was ordering a halt for the purpose of breakfast. On the side of a hillock beneath a wide-spreading beech-tree, whose low, sweeping boughs afforded them a canopy of dark and glossy verdure, and across whose roots a broad shelf of yellowish rock stretched itself as a convenient table, the old man spread their simple viands; whilst beneath welled forth, with a faint sound as of fairy music, a fountain

of living water, Nature's nectar for the two wearied wayfarers. Ludmila's first impulse was to bathe her face and hands in the little rill that trickled from the spring : then, suddenly recollecting her embrowned skin, she looked inquiringly at the minstrel.

"Never fear," he answered : "the stain may wear off, but cannot be washed off, save by an herb which I will supply when it is needed."

So she proceeded to splash the sparkling drops over her brow, to wash the dust off her chestnut tresses and train them again into their usual graceful ringlets, while Bercthold arranged their rude fare upon the primitive table,—as primitive, though more substantial than those of Æneas and his companions on the shores of Latium, although not, like them, dignified by prophecy. Then with the appetite of a country maiden the heiress and court-lady sat down upon the turf to eat dried boar's flesh and black bread and salt. When their meal was concluded, the minstrel took the harp and sang a hymn in Latin ; one of the pious chants of the persecuted Waldenses, in which they compared the sufferings they underwent from the most holy father of the Holy Catholic Church by the hands of his dutiful and devout children, to the sufferings of the Israelites at the hands of the Egyptians. Ludmila knew it well ; for often had her mother sung it in the solitude of her own chamber, at the same time reading to her words of love from a manuscript copy of the New Testament in the Bohemian tongue. Her tears started at this sudden memento of that dear mother. It seemed to her fervid mind almost mysterious that it should present itself to her from the lips of a stranger, at such a time, when she had thus cast herself forth upon so strange an errand, unprotected, and uncertain of the issue. She viewed it, in her innocent superstition, as a good omen ; and, bending her head meekly, repeated a few sentences of Holy Writ, and uttered a short prayer for the preservation of Albert and herself.

On again they rode; and the old man felt young as he watched the delight which swelled the heart of his charge in the great and glorious beauty of earth; the gently-undulating plains, with their carpet of short green turf enamelled with flowers and herbs, which threw up delicious fragrance when crushed beneath their horses' hoofs; occasional groves, the scanty remnant of some dense forest, bending graciously to the breeze, and relieving the eye by the soft shadow which they threw across the travellers' path; the mysteriously beautiful blue haze, far in the eastern horizon, sloping towards the southwest and marking the gradual rise of their path.

Ludmila threw out her arms, as if she would have embraced it all, exclaiming, "O Nature! O Freedom!"

Berthold kept silence until her excitement had subsided, and then addressed her with unaccustomed gravity:

"Yes, all is beautiful here; but we have now to think of other things besides pleasure and beauty."

The young girl, aroused from her dreams, turned upon him a bewildered and questioning glance.

"Lady, every step we take from the city we have left increases our danger. It is not enough that you have stained your fair cheeks and hidden your bright curls. If we meet any travellers, you must not permit yourself to speak; when we stop again at any public house or shepherd's hut, you must not sing: you must look down, too, and seem wearied and sullen, that no one may desire to address you; and I shall say that you are under a vow of silence as a penance. Will you remember this?"

Ludmila laughed loud and long at the idea. She—used to singing out as fitfully as a bird in the greenwood and chattering like a spoiled child as she was—to keep silence as if for penance! She would willingly obey if she could; but she should be sure to forget.

"Ah, my dear young lady," said the old man, depre-

catingly, "you are accustomed to hear young knights sing love-ditties of their danger from your sweet voice and lovely smiles; but, trust me, the danger now is likely to be to yourself if you do not keep both from observation. You are not now surrounded by vassals; you are not now the heiress of Reisenberg; you have no protector but a poor old man; and we are likely to meet those who are on the look-out for prey of any kind, and who are too accustomed to penetrating disguises to be easily deceived. They would soon learn that your ringing and flexible voice, your changeful eyes, could belong to no one but a woman."

"My good friend, you frighten me. What must I do?"

"Only, if we meet any of these marauders, be silent and look unconcerned, as if it were no strange thing to you. They will then pay you no particular attention. But should this merry mischief of yours strike them——"

He paused. Ludmila looked him steadily in the face with an expression firm almost to sternness: no merry mischief lurked there longer. She then drew her dagger from its sheath, and, holding it up so that the sunbeams ran to and fro on its blue sheen, gazed on it with a quiet smile. It was none of those tiny jewelled ornaments which fair ladies were in the habit of wearing at their girdles, but a substantial weapon, such as a knight might use for giving the *coup de grace* to a foe in battle-field or judicial combat, and to a stag after a hunt.

The minstrel's eyes followed each turn of hers; and he saw what great change could be wrought by a few words. In fact, in spite of all the Emperor's good policy,—in spite of all the occupation afforded by him and by the imperial cities to the petty nobles and knights who held no territorial possessions for their maintenance,—numberless were the fortified towers perched upon positions almost inaccessible by nature, by these marauders, who could not stain their escutcheons by the degradation of commerce or agriculture, and who

therefore deemed themselves privileged to prey on the labors of those who could. Nearly every flourishing village and rural district were afflicted with some such pest, who would sweep down upon them like the griffin-horse of the Italian romancers, bear off in triumph whatever spoil was most accessible, and laugh behind drawbridge and portcullis at the dismay and impotent rage of the sufferers, while feasting upon the fat herds, fine grain, and strong wines thus uncereemoniously purveyed. Nor did they always content themselves with four-footed victims, as many a desolate hearthstone and frantic father or husband could testify. The young countess had heard of such things, but they had been so out of her sphere that she had scarce felt them to be true; but now, far from her father's castle and his ranks of men-at-arms, far from the city and its crowds of sturdy artisans and burghers, a strange sense of helplessness crept over her, and the gilded clouds of romance which had floated so alluringly before her path vanished, leaving the atmosphere as gray and cold as the first dawn of a November morning. But she came of too proud and true a race to shrink from any effort once attempted: but she broke no more into snatches of song, nor again indulged her horse in a sweeping gallop in advance of her guide.

On the fourth day they beheld the mysterious blue mists which gracefully veiled the outlines of the giant rocks that girdled the rich and fertile Bohemia from its sister provinces of the Empire. The old man's heart rose with the sight.

"Now I feel as if all were accomplished!" he exclaimed; "now I feel at home! for with but scant warning I could elude and escape almost any danger that might threaten us here.

"I have chosen this route," explained Bercthold, as they toiled on foot up a rough acclivity, while he led the horses, "because we shall here reach at night an abandoned tower that will afford us better shelter, and safer, than any of the cot-

tages we might find. We shall awaken no curiosity but that of the owls and bats, which is soon satisfied."

Before sunset they drew up before the old fortress. The minstrel turned the horses loose to graze on the grass that grew luxuriantly in the deserted court, and then led the way under the broken arch of the gateway, and up the steep and narrow stair, to a room which he had supposed the best.

"Many a rare feast have I seen in this old den," he said,—"and fray too, for that matter. There are marks, now, of the last that was ever fought here." And he pointed to a dingy stain at Ludmila's very feet. The young girl recoiled, shuddering.

"It was long, long ago, lady. Of all who were alive then there are few left but myself; and he who got his death-blow on that spot well deserved it."

"Tell me something about it, Father Bercthold. I must try to get used to such things, in word if not in deed. Besides, I feel a strange loneliness,—something I've not known yet throughout our journey; and if you don't talk to me I shall want to run away, if I only knew where to run."

"He was a handsome fellow, that one," answered the minstrel, indicating with a nod the broad, unsightly spot; "and as wicked as he was handsome. On the north side from us is a valley, surrounded by gentle slopes, and rich in beautiful vineyards and fine fields of grain. Here was a large village, filled with industrious and peaceful laborers, and, farther on, an abbey, to which these good people did service for the fields they tilled. Well, Michael fell in love, after his fashion, with an honest, warm-hearted girl of the village, who knew no better than to give him true love for false. She tried hard and vainly to lead him to quit fighting, and turn farmer for her sake. Her father was not poor for his station, and was, moreover, in great confidence with the monks of the abbey, and had often money which

he had collected for them. Michael watched his chance; and, getting together some of his intimates at a time when his lord happened to be absent with the chief portion of his men, he set the house on fire, got the money and his mistress, and left the rest to do as they could. Poor girl! the neighbors had begun to think that she loved him too well; but they knew she would never be guilty of wronging any one but herself for his sake. He felt sure that his lord would pardon him, and think robbing the monks a good joke. But there was more harm than that done; for half the village was laid in ashes, and the abbot gathered his vassals, and, with some aid from a neighboring knight, sent a stout force after the marauders. Their lord had just then returned, and my master the baron, with a few retainers, myself among them, was with him. In this very room there was a sort of court held: such of the men of the castle as their lord had left behind him, were brought forward to be identified. The moment the old father beheld Michael, he flew upon him like a maniac,—as indeed he was; for he seemed to have the strength of ten men. There was a terrible uproar; and, before they could separate them, the old man had driven his knife, strong and true, into Michael's breast. But the worst of all was, the poor girl, poor Christiana, fearing what might chance, got in unobserved. Who struck her no one could tell; but in the confusion and violence she too got a fatal thrust, and died with her head upon the hard-hearted soldier's breast who had breathed his last just before her. The father never knew any more than a wild beast from that hour till the day of his death, and had to be chained and watched like one. Ah, I shall never forget it! I can almost fancy I see all the people, great and small, as they filed up the path we have just mounted, and——"

Ludmila, who had been gazing for the last minutes from the window to hide the tears which the old man's story

had called forth, here gave a gasping exclamation and sank down on a bench, pale as death. Berethold looked immediately out, and, to his horror and dismay, saw three mounted men, two of them in the complete dress of troopers, entering the outer gate of the tower. The men-at-arms uttered a loud shout of derision as the minstrel met their view; and poor Ludmila, all her fictitious courage flying at this coarse announcement of the new-comers, flung herself into the old man's arms for shelter, her heart beating as if it would break.

With an expression of fatherly compassion, the old man sustained for an instant in his arms the shivering form that clung to him. With the next thought he drew her from the window.

"Listen to me, Countess of Riesenberg," he exclaimed, in a low, earnest tone, "and forget at once that you are not what you seem. You are bolder, stronger, more active, than most of your sex; and the time may have come for you to profit by these qualities. Here are but three men,—one of them, by his dress, a lay-brother of some monastery: as for the others, look at them as you looked at the blade of your dagger the other day, and they will never suspect you. But if you are frightened, if you repent what you have done, I have but to proclaim your rank to these strangers, and you are safe from every risk but a heavy ransom, which his lordship your father will gladly pay."

His speech had all the effect he anticipated. Ere he had finished the last clause, Ludmila was all the countess, and, withdrawing from the minstrel's support, paced the long apartment with a quick yet firm step, the bright blue eye emitting fires not at all like those of love.

Berethold was satisfied. He took off his wallet and flung it down upon the remnant of a table that still remained, and said, with a meaning smile,—

"Get out our provision, Caspar, while I see what sort

of companions the saints have sent us." Then, with his finger on his lips as a last warning, he hastened off to delay the strangers from the young girl's presence until she should have regained her composure.

He found the emissaries of Sir Henry and the vicar stabling their horses as he had just done his own,—not, however, without some symptoms of remonstrance on the part of Eblis, who seemed to be debating whether his rank in right of his mistress, and the claim of previous occupancy, did not give him the privilege of ejecting the intruders. On the appearance of the minstrel, however, he with great dignity resigned the settlement of the matter to him, as to a delegated official, and resumed his discussion of the grass before him.

The troopers did not take the approach of the old man so easily. There was a conscious dignity in his countenance and manner for which they were not prepared: so they looked at each other, and then at the *frater* or lay-brother, on whom they probably considered the duty of words devolved, as on themselves that of blows, where such persuasions were like to be needed, and brother Martin addressed himself to the work.

"A good-even to you, worthy father," he said, with the air of one who waived his religious authority out of deference to the other's age: "we are fortunate in finding such fellowship as yours among these ruins; for truly we had some doubts about entering them, for fear of ghosts or evil spirits."

"There were evil spirits enough in them before they were dismantled," was the reply; "but since then I have frequently rested here on my journeys without disturbance—which is more than was my luck before."

"Ah! if you know the place so well, then, you can tell us something of the judgment which brought it to such a pass.

My comrades are men of violence and sin; and perchance something in the tale may warn them of the evil of their ways."

A sarcastic smile lighted the face of the minstrel. "I might tell them, too, that there is a great deal of sin without violence," he answered.

Brother Martin gave a sharp glance at the speaker; but his face had become perfectly quiet and meaningless; and, unable to gather any thing from it, the *frater* crossed himself, repeating *Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum*,—for which important consolation he was indebted, not to his learning, but to the frequent repetitions which had fallen on his ear during a long and not always congenial service in the monastery to which he had attached himself. It suited perfectly well to aid Berethold to a conclusion as to the errand of these men: he was nearly satisfied that they were intentionally following his charge and himself; but on whose authority? He was not long in deciding; for he was far from forgetting the vicar-general, and the tender benediction bestowed by that worthy ecclesiastic on the fair heiress of Riesenbergh.

"If it be so," he thought, shaking with concealed rage, "I will turn heretic." And with some little inconsistency he called on all the most prominent of the Bohemian saints to bear him witness. Then, with a sudden resolution, he turned again to Martin, and asked, abruptly,—

"Why have you followed me so far?"

As is often the case with persons who can coolly pursue and open their nefarious designs, the emissary was confused by finding them anticipated. He would have resorted to some subterfuge; but the penetrating, impatient look of the old Bohemian showed that any delay would be idle: so, with rather the appearance of one obeying the orders of a superior than securing a prisoner, he drew forth a writing which he

placed in the minstrel's hands. Berethold possessed the accomplishment of reading, and immediately perused an order for the arrest of a novice who had fled from the monastic church of St. Dominic in Nuremberg, led away by one of those profane and ungodly men calling themselves minstrels. It was all plain enough and crafty enough; and the vexed reader saw that just then there was but one effort for him to make,—to hold his tongue.

"And what are you to do with me? These directions do not make me a prisoner."

Brother Martin hesitated: this part of the affair had been left very much to his own discretion.

"I have not yet made up my mind," he replied, at last.

"And the boy: do you take him back to Nuremberg?"

"My superior did not direct me to let you into his counsels."

Berethold bent his head as in due humility, and, by way of proving his learning equal to that of his adversary, repeated,—

"Sacerdotes tui induantur justitiam."

Brother Martin expressed a wish to see the runaway novice.

"Assuredly, worthy sir," was the reply; and the minstrel led the way. The young girl had spread their simple fare upon the table, and, having drawn one of the benches to its side, now sat leaning on her left arm and coolly amusing herself with driving her dagger through the thick plank in the centre of a circle which she had first traced with its point. And truly there was no contemptible amount of strength in that right hand, rendered vigorous by its owner's habits of constant exercise in the open air, and of reining strong and spirited horses.

At the sound of so many entering footsteps, the countess lifted her eyes and surveyed the strangers deliberately, yet

with a sort of dignified apathy which expresses a sense of the inferiority of others far more strongly than the most imperious manners. Brother Martin felt ill at ease, and grew evidently ill-humored that he should feel so. Ludmila drove the dagger deeper than ever into the board. The men-at-arms shrugged their shoulders and looked inquiringly from one to the other.

"This, I suppose, is the boy you seek?" said Berethold, finally.

Martin assented. Ludmila raised her head again, and, surveying him with the same cold, unconcerned air, asked,—

"You are in search of me?"

"Yes, most noble—yes, my son," replied the brother, confusedly.

"And for what purpose?"

Martin handed her the slip of parchment: the countess cast her eyes over it.

"And then?" she continued.

He did not reply. The manner in which the minstrel had forced the acknowledgment of his errand had entirely deranged his plans, and he began to fear that he should not be able to impress his captive with a sufficient sense of the weight of his character as a religious emissary. As if to corroborate his opinion, she turned to her protector, saying,—

"Father Berethold, with your leave, I would sup before it grows dark."

She then turned her back upon the servant of the vicar-general, and began to eat like a hungry traveller, as she was. The soldiers, meantime, having no interest in the conversation, had been breaking up one of the wooden benches, and were with great industry kindling a fire both for light and warmth, the latter by no means uncomfortable in that high mountain-region.

The repast concluded, Ludmila and the minstrel sat in

silence, both occupied in attempting to divine what influences were at the bottom of their pursuit and detention.

The vicar's servant sat affecting to con his breviary by the blaze from the chimney, but in reality cogitating how to disembarass himself of the minstrel. The troopers, having disencumbered themselves of head-piece and breast-plate, were leaning against the wall in a state between sleeping and waking. Ludmila watched them cautiously for a few moments, until she could hope they were off their guard, and then said, suddenly, in a loud tone,—

“ Henry of Lichtenstein ! ”

The men started and opened their eyes. A caustic smile played on the old man's lips : he knew little of the person named, but he understood at once the young girl's wit and its success. She continued, as if entirely unconscious of the effect her words had produced :—

“ In the morning I will tell you what I have to say, good Berethold. I am too sleepy now.”

So saying, she withdrew to a bench in one corner of the room, on which, after drawing a heavy mantle around her, she coiled herself up for the night. Her protector placed a bench so that no one could approach her without disturbing him, and stretched himself out for slumber. At a nod from Martin, the men-at-arms arose and disposed their burly persons against the door, whilst he remained on guard.

The oldest of the party slumbered most lightly, and was the first to become conscious of the dawning day. He arose silently, and went to a window to refresh himself with the morning air. In a few moments, Ludmila stood by his side. and, placing her hand on his shoulder, gave him a glance that said, “ What can we do ? ” The wary Bohemian looked at the sleeping foe, and answered, below his breath, “ Wait.” Tears then rushed to the eyes of the young girl and hung upon her brown lashes. The old man shook his

head, and smiled cheeringly; but, afraid that she might give way to her emotion, he turned abruptly to the lay-brother, and, seizing his arm in no gentle manner, exclaimed, loudly,—

“Rise, holy man, for the sun is rising, and, as it is the duty of the jailer to feed his prisoners, I should be glad if you would begin to think of purveying for us.”

Martin sprang up in alarm: a glance, however, satisfied him that all was right, and with a thrust of his foot he dispersed the slumbers of his companions. When all were thoroughly awake, the countess, whose tears had fled before the old man’s stratagem, turned to him and said,—

“I began to tell you something last night: it was only that these soldiers are in the pay of Sir Henry of Lichtenstein, a vassal of Count Otto of Riesenbergh. Do you take us to him, friend,” she added, addressing the *frater*, “or will he come here for us?”

It was rather unfortunate for the full success of Sir Henry’s plans that, in his extreme prudence, he had decided to intrust their entire execution to the vicar, never dreaming that the latter could have any views clashing with his own. His men were ignorant that the affair in any way concerned their master’s interests. Therefore, at the assertion which the novice pronounced so positively, they could only stare at each other and wonder. The lay-brother, however, mastered his surprise enough to reply,—

“My son, it would be much better for you to tell your beads, than to be troubling yourself about troopers or their masters.”

“I am troubling myself about nothing in the world but my breakfast—or rather the want of it, as you seem in no haste to get it for me.”

“Never fear,” broke in one of the soldiers: “he is not likely to go without his own, I’ll swear.”

“Meantime,” rejoined the young girl, “let me at least

have the air, and for which I am suffering almost as much as for my breakfast."

To this the guardian condescendingly agreed, and the party descended to the courtyard.

"And now, good *meistersanger*," said Martin to the minstrel, "as you are at home in these regions, you can perhaps tell us which way we are to turn for something to eat."

"There are cottages a mile hence."

The worthy brother pondered a moment to decide whether he should go in person, or send one of the soldiers. By going himself, he left the men exposed to be tampered with; but then he should get a much better breakfast, and much sooner. These last reflections were too important to be readily set aside: so, after receiving all possible directions from Bercthold, he mounted his mule and was soon lost to view in the sinuous descent of the mountain-path.

Ludmila wandered around the place, hoping that after a while the men would relax their vigilance and afford her an opportunity of taking counsel with the Bohemian. But their position as spies seemed too congenial.

"It can do me no harm to introduce dissension among them, if I can," she thought; and, in the same abrupt manner as before, she said,—

"You serve Sir Henry of Lichtenstein. And, while he is expecting you to look to his interests, you are stupidly helping yonder owl to secure for his master all the reward of which your own should receive half."

"And how were we to know that," answered the younger of the two, "when he told us nothing about it?"

Ludmila laughed aloud at the success of her little stratagem, and the minstrel—who had been gazing wistfully wherever a thin blue smoke rising from the valleys marked the presence of man, and thinking how easily he could incite some of the stout peasants to the rescue, if he could but

reach them—now came up to see what wild prank his charge was contemplating, and to put in a word, if need were.

“Sir Henry told you nothing about it?”

“No.”

“That was because he was outwitted by his assistant. What chance do you suppose a soldier stands against a monk?”

“A devilish small one, it is true. But how came you to know any thing about it?”

“I’ll answer that when you can tell me how I came to know you.”

“Ah, that is strange. You are not a Bohemian?”

“No, but my guide is; and among these mountains there are many things to be learned, of which good Christians are afraid,” she added, with a mischievous laugh.

The men looked with some awe at Berethold, and crossed themselves.

“What a chap for a cloister!” muttered the elder.

“A cloister!” repeated the countess, contemptuously.

“You believe that? I should have thought you might have learned more wit by serving Henry of Lichtenstein.”

The men-at-arms exchanged looks, evidently greatly puzzled.

“He is at Ulm by this time,” the countess continued, “and reporting to my father the pains he has taken to have me returned safely to Nuremberg among the Empress’s pages, where I belong. When this rat of the monastery has done with you, he will send you to your master with some fool’s errand, which will earn you broken heads if not worse; for Sir Henry is not very forgiving when he is disappointed.”

“But what are we to do, then?”

“Take me to my father at Ulm, and be well paid for your pains.”

“It sounds very well,” said the elder and more cautious of the troopers; “but whether it is very well, how are we to know?”

"You may as well be cheated by us as by him; and you see that he makes you, like blind moles, furrow up the path for him, without letting you know where it leads."

"That is true, indeed."

"He did not even tell you who we were, although he knows well enough himself," chimed in the minstrel; "and, what is more, you will never learn from him, for——"

A loud, impatient shout from the hill-side below interrupted the speaker, and the whole party hurried to the edge of the platform, whence they saw brother Martin clinging stoutly to the bridle of an ass, the rider of which was using very stringent measures to enforce it to rescue him from the worshipful society so pertinaciously bestowed upon him; but the animal, unluckily smaller and weaker than the enemy's mule, was constrained, despite his best efforts, to yield himself true prisoner, rescue or no rescue.

The soldiers hurried at once down the steep pathway, to assist in securing what their leader's earnestness led them to conclude must be a valuable prize; and a few moments sufficed to unite the whole incongruous party on the bit of table-land at the base of the tower.

The captive was a Jew,—a sufficient reason for ill-treating, even should they be disappointed of the more substantial pleasure of robbing him. He was old, too: his back was bent with years; thin locks of silver hair escaped from the distinctive cap he wore; and a long white beard fell to his breast. Ludmila trembled for him as much as she had at first for herself: she knew well the frail tenure the Israelite had upon the mercy of the Christian, and had heard enough to make her shudder when she saw the troopers whirl their prey from his miserable beast with far less consideration than they felt for the ass himself. He sprang from the ground, however, with an alertness not to have been anticipated from his infirm appearance. The men raised a loud laugh.

"A Jew is like a cat," said one: "throw him how you will, he comes down upon his feet."

"He has as many lives, too," responded the other: "they say it takes more time to roast a Jew than a heretic."

The next assault was on the pack; but here the lay-brother interposed.

"Stop there," he cried, "and remember that the son of Ishmael is the captive of my bow and spear."

"I thought the Saracens were the sons of Ishmael," said Berethold.

"You did? And what business has a profane layman to oppose his thoughts to the knowledge of a son of the Church?" asked Martin, with some warmth, his own breakfast having been evidently of a highly-invigorating character.

"None at all, good sir, except to show how little knowledge there is outside of the church-walls."

"Ah, well, very discreetly said," was the condescending reply. "And now let us see what spoil the Egyptian hath in store for us; for truly we have had but sorry cheer since we left the goodly city."

"And it seems to me that you have a mind our cheer should be sorrier yet, or else you forget that we have not broken our fast, although I told you so long ago how earnestly I was that way disposed," interrupted the countess.

"Um! ah! Truly, I crave your pardon, noble,—excuse me, my son,—"stammered the disconcerted brother, not a little embarrassed by Ludmila's mocking and authoritative manner, and suddenly conscious that the troopers were for the first time watching the communication between himself and his prisoners. "But let us go in, and then I will spread out the provant."

"Into the court,—yes," she replied, re-entering the shattered postern through which they had emerged; "but not into that

old rats' nest above. I am safe enough here; and I am certain my appetite will be much better."

She threw herself on the grass as she spoke. Martin produced the stores he had procured, while Berethold placed before her what she chose.

"And is this breakfast only for one?" asked one of the soldiers, abruptly; and with an insolent air he drew near, as if about to seat himself by the side of the supposed boy. It was but a manœuvre, intended to betray from the lay-brother, if possible, some veritable information concerning the novice. But Martin was now on his guard, and evinced none of the consternation he really felt at the threatened familiarity: the minstrel, however, interposed, exclaiming,—

"Is it after this fashion that you were directed to treat your charge? Did not the holy father, the vicar-general, order you to observe every respect and attention consistent with safe-keeping?"

Brother Martin colored with anger, for he saw that his satellites were losing not a word or look that was passing, and felt satisfied that some disaffection had been produced during his absence; while, on their part, the men now gave full credence to the representations of the old Bohemian and his mysterious companion, that the knavish sprig of the cloister was using them as tools for his master's interest alone. Inwardly resolving to be even with him in some sort, they took up their portion of black bread, goat's cheese, and dried meat, and withdrew to a corner of the wall to discuss their food and their future proceedings at the same time. The lay-brother found a convenient relief for his ire in the person of the Jew.

"Here, hound," he commenced, "bring me that pack. No doubt you have cheated some unsuspecting Christian of its contents: so disgorge now."

With a feeble step the old man approached and laid his

properly humbly at the feet of his captor. Martin opened it, and, one by one, took out each article, laying it carefully by after deciding on its value. There were poignards of the finest steel, with gold hilts, and scabbards curiously inlaid after the Eastern fashion: heavy gold chains; rings of quaint device; and, among the rest, a suit of chain armor, so finely and strongly linked that it might almost have defied the golden lance of Argalia, and so elastic that it was rolled up like a piece of velvet. The troopers meantime had hurried through their meal, and, like birds of prey, were standing with eager eyes over the spoils. But the experienced *frater* was not quite satisfied with the results.

"Do you expect me to believe that this is all you have?" he inquired, in a menacing tone.

"Surely, surely. What better could a poor Jew have? It is not much; but all is of the best."

"All very good, honest Solomon, or Isaac, or whatever you may call yourself; but not quite enough for me to believe. You are not without some rich jewel, which could buy all this trash a thousand times over."

"Nothing have I,—nothing, by the God of my fathers, but a few coins to pay for my food upon the long journey."

"Dog, do I not know your accursed race, your tricks, your lies, your blasphemies? Off with his cap and gaberdine, and we'll soon see what he has hidden away."

Nothing loath, the elder of the men-at-arms snatched off the cap and pitched it to his superior, and then proceeded to strip off the robe. To this the Israelite did not so readily accede; and, as if he had observed something of humanity in Ludmila's face, he flung off his assailant and rushed towards her, exclaiming,—

"Good youth, surely God hath given thee the grace of compassion, and thou hast, too, a look of authority: if thou

hast hope to see the white hairs of thy father protected from violence, lend me thy aid !”

The poor girl, who had with difficulty repressed the womanly instinct to scream during this scene, and who felt her helplessness more keenly for the Jew's sake than for her own, sprang to her feet, agitated and angry, yet not knowing what she could say or do. But, without heeding, although so near as to jostle her, the trooper caught his prey by the throat with such savage force that the latter, agile as he had shown himself, was at once powerless. Struggling vainly and gasping for breath, his bloodshot and protruding eyes bent still an appealing glance upon her. At this unaccustomed and appalling sight, so goodly a portion of the spirit of Count Otto “the Stormy” boiled up in her veins that she snatched the dagger from her side, and, by a blow as sure and strong as she had aimed at the oaken plank, drove it through the man's brawny arm. With a fierce oath of rage and pain, he released his grasp. Berethold, with fiery eye, lent his arm to support the staggering victim; while Ludmila stood firmly between him and his persecutors, bending on them the glance of one accustomed to command. A storm of oaths rolled over the lips of the troopers, levelled, however, at the lay-brother; for the courage and resolution of the disguised countess, the flashing eye and compressed lips with which she regarded them, had their full effect on persons used to obey the authority of rank, and to recognise it by such signs even when actual power was wanting to back it.

“Here's a cockatrice to be hatched in a cloister!” the wounded man finally summoned courage to grumble between his teeth.

“Peace, brute !” interrupted the countess, indignantly; and, motioning to brother Martin, who stood aghast at the extraordinary turn of the affair, she withdrew out of the troopers’

hearing, taking care, however, to keep between them and the Jew.

"How dare you," she addressed him,—“you, who must know what and who I am,—how dare you authorize such an outrage in my presence?”

If the slender and beautiful girl had been transformed into an actual Medusa before his eyes, the poor *frater* could scarce have been more petrified than by what had chanced. The inspiration, too, of the flask which he carried for his spiritual solace had by this time evaporated; and his lack of words was at first truly lamentable. His thoughts, however, were to the purpose that a woman must scold, but could not scold always, even though she were a countess.

The present case, however, was an exception to his experiences. Like every good soldier, Count Otto was a man of few words in the way of business; and his daughter had profited by his example. Having asked a question, she awaited an answer. Like an old fox, brother Martin was compelled to double, in the hope of effecting a diversion in his favor.

"For the Blessed Virgin's sake, who has protected you so far, be more cautious, noble lady," he said, in a guarded tone. "If you did but know the anxiety and trouble the holy vicar has had in the hope to keep you from the dangers which he discovered would beset your path, you would be far from finding fault with the most humble of his servants, whose fidelity he has honored by sending him to circumvent these sons of Belial."

"I have heard of that person before," returned Ludmila, with a provoking smile, "but never chanced to encounter himself or his sons until to-day. When I understand better what the vicar has done for me, I will be grateful. At present the question is not about myself, but this Jew."

"You do yourself wrong, noble countess, to think of such

a scum. Know you not that the foul race ruff through the land like wolves, filling it with all manner of heresies and sorceries, and plundering all good Christians who have any dealings with them?"

"If they plunder only good Christians, I fear their robberies are not very extensive. But to the point, man,—to the point. What do you mean to do with him?"

The lay-brother gave a significant nod towards the men-at-arms. "They have started to look for hidden treasure; and even your knife, lady, will hardly drive them off the scent the second time. I think I can insure his life, though, if he will permit himself to be searched quietly."

"Shame, shame on such Christians!" exclaimed the young girl, angrily. "At least, you can let me speak with him apart a few minutes,—unless you are afraid we shall all three transform ourselves into birds, and fly off over the battlements, or into lizards, and glide away among the rubbish."

"Far be it from me to dispute your reasonable will; and I will keep them quiet, meantime, by a division of the goods which lie yonder." And, with much respect of manner, Martin retired, laying up, amid gall and malice, the dangerous words so carelessly uttered by the inexperienced and indiscreet speaker.

The conversation had been fully overheard by Berethold and the Israelite, on whose face, after the sex of his young protector had been so unreservedly mentioned, a gleam of recognition began to steal, as he cautiously watched the glance of the clear eye and the elastic play of the proudly-arched lips which so bravely espoused his cause.

Ludmila led the way to the inner court of the tower, when, turning to the Jew, she said,—

"One of your people, some years since, saved a Christian maiden whom I dearly love, and her mother, from the power of an unrighteous prince——"

"Holy Father Abraham!" interrupted the person addressed: "then you are indeed——" He hesitated, as if doubting whether it were safe to utter the name.

"I am indeed Ludmila of Riesenbergh. But who are you, who seem to know me?"

"Noble lady, my life is in your hands," he answered: "I am that Ozias of whom you have heard."

The countess stared at him in amazement. "You, Ozias?" she repeated.

"Even so," he replied, sadly: "what protection has the persecuted Israelite but in craft?"

"Pardon, lady," said Berethold; "but if you would take counsel you must do it quickly, for yonder hounds are not like to leave us long in peace."

"Right; and therefore, Ozias, you must satisfy them that you have nothing of value, or render it up if you have."

"Nothing of my own, kind lady, I swear. But I will disguise nothing from you: an ill return indeed would it be to deceive you, who have been so generous. After the time you mention, I escaped discovery by taking shelter in Halle, a free and generous city, where our people are protected in their honest industry. I have made many journeys for my own business and that of others, and have now travelled from Ulm into Bohemia, as far even as the goodly city of Prague. One jewel only have I: it belongs to a young nobleman of Bohemia, who is desirous to join the citizens of Ulm in their strife against the Emperor."

"Enough! enough!" interrupted Ludmila, smiling. "I am very glad that you must surrender it; for my father is at Ulm, fighting *for* the Emperor."

"And I am very glad, noble lady, to have you as witness to the manner in which I lost it,—that the excellent youth from whom I had it may not suspect me of defrauding him; a *cruel suspicion*, which it is always hard for the despised

Jew to avoid. Yet I think this young man is not of that strain."

"And who is he?" asked the young girl and the minstrel, in the same breath.

"Forgive me, my kind protectress," pleaded Ozias: "that is the secret of another; and my word is pledged not to betray it, unless to save my life."

"If that be all," said the minstrel, "then I promise you cause enough to speak; for I suspect——"

"Patience, patience, Father Berethold," interposed the young girl, although herself trembling with anxious curiosity.

"My child," exclaimed the excited minstrel, "you do not know! you do not think! The Knights Hospitallers are the allies of the free cities; the Knights Hospitallers are at Ulm: it is with them——"

The sudden appearance of brother Martin cut short the thread of his eloquence.

"Noble countess," he said, "I await your commands."

Ludmila gave the Jew a look, which he obeyed by taking from his vest a small bag of deer-skin, opening it, and producing a massive clasp composed of an immense ruby, set around by diamonds of fine size and water, which he tendered to the lay-brother. Berethold arrested the arm of Ozias long enough to give a searching glance at the ornament. Martin's look of delight was sufficient evidence of the value of the prize; but he paused to ask if that were all.

"I am fully satisfied that it is," replied the countess, "and expect that you and your troopers will be content with my assurance. And, to save any further trouble or misunderstanding, it will be as well for you to impress on them that, prisoner though I am, it may be wise not to try my patience too far."

Brother Martin acquiesced by a low obeisance, and withdrew. The next moment the minstrel turned upon Ozias,

with a glance that seemed to threaten the Jew's life, and exclaimed.—

“Albert of Rabenstein.”

“Yes,” he continued, almost beside himself with agitation and anger, “it is Albert of Rabenstein whom you are thus aiding to escape from the authority of his father, that he may herd with this scum of the free cities,—with disgraced nobles, runaway serfs, misbelieving Jews, and accursed heretics.”

Poor Ludmila stood aghast during this tirade, shivering with mingled emotions, her beautiful mouth half open, her wild eyes dilated with an expression that asked every thing, while she was powerless to utter any thing. But, proud as sensitive, she soon mastered the outward signs of her emotion, and then, approaching Ozias, laid her hand upon his arm, and, fixing her eyes on his, said, in a low, distinct tone,—

“If you are sincere in acknowledging that I, by God's help, have served you, I ask you, by your faith in God the Creator, whom Jew and Gentile alike acknowledge, to explain this mystery.”

“Noble countess,” Ozias answered, “I cannot refuse your adjuration; but what I would say I must not impart to a third person, although I leave any subsequent revelation to your own sense of necessity and of honor.”

Berethold at once retired.

“Speak now,” Ludmila said: “speak honestly; speak fully; for I am the betrothed of Baron Albert.”

Despite the efforts of her pride, her lips quivered and her voice was broken as she said this. Unbidden tears, too, swelled in her deep blue eyes, not unperceived by the Jew, although she dashed them away with an impatient hand.

“By the ark of the living God, lady, I swear to deal justly,” replied the Israelite. “Whilst pursuing my affairs in Halle, I was sought out by a person from Ulm, who com-

manded my immediate presence in that city by a token which I dared not refuse,—a token given by my father many years since to a Christian who had befriended him in his need. I had supposed its possessor to have been long dead; but, nevertheless, it was my duty to obey the summons. I went. I was received at night and in obscurity by the mysterious leader of the citizens whom they call *Habenicht*. He was disguised in black armor; nor could I even discern any thing by his voice, which sounded hollow and unnatural behind his closed visor. He gave me the word by which I was bound to acknowledge his right to the token, however he became possessed of it: I heard his orders, and swore to obey them. On my return from Prague, then, I stopped at the castle of Rabenstein, and communed there with a monk called Father Cyrillus, and with his pupil, Baron Albert of Rabenstein. The latter was resolved on joining the Knights Hospitallers, and serving the cause of freedom. To procure money for his purpose, he intrusted me, on seeing my credentials from the leader at Ulm, with the jewel you have seen. It was not, however, his intention to wait for news from me, but to muster such of his father's vassals as he could entirely trust, and await me at an obscure village between Nuremberg and Ulm,—pardon me, lady, that I must not name it to you,—where I was to meet him with the moneys I could procure.”

“And all this he seemed to do freely, without influence or authority?”

“Surely. How else could it be, when he was acting against the will of his parent?”

“And did you discover no reason for it but his love of the cause he adopts?”

Ozias looked embarrassed, but replied, “I have said all that I know.”

“I ask not only what you know, but also what you may have surmised,” rejoined Ludmila.

"Since you will not permit me to be silent, lady, I must reply that the period was approaching for the fulfilment of a betrothal between Baron Albert and the daughter of a German nobleman, and that his design must at all hazards be effected before the time arrived."

Ludmila felt a sharp pang through her heart, which made her gasp for breath : then, in a moment commanding herself, her lips curled with a proud and careless smile, as she said,—

"Enough, good Ozias : I have no reason to doubt the fidelity of your report. I have nothing but thanks now for your reward ; but if I live you will hear from me, and know me grateful. The next thing is to secure your safety."

"Thanks, generous lady ; but that depends very much upon the cap they have snatched from me : they will find nothing they can understand ; but it may lead them to suppose it worth their while to deliver me into the hands of men of power."

"That would be for money ; and money may therefore counterbalance the danger. We must see."

She led the way into the outer court, where the lay-brother and the men-at-arms were still speculating and disputing over their booty, and beckoned brother Martin towards her.

"It is my wish," she said, authoritatively, "that the Jew be conducted safely to Ulm or Nuremberg. How can I secure this ?"

"That is a troublesome question, noble countess ; for, if we let him off, he may find others who will take his life in revenge for his want of means to buy it."

"You mean he may meet others like yourselves ?" asked Ludmila.

"Ah, good lady, if you knew the nature of these vipers, you would say we had dealt very gently by him. But, if you desire it, I will send one of these men to accompany and protect him," continued Martin, secretly well pleased with the *hope* that the heiress would purchase of him at a high price

the very act on which he was resolved, in order to place so goodly a prize as Ozias in the hands of the vicar-general, and desirous also to shake off one of his companions, since they had begun to suspect him.

"That is very well," replied Ludmila; "but how am I to know that you do not send him from one danger into another?"

"And how am I to know that you do not send him to betray us to your friends?" was the insolent, yet apposite reply.

"Because by so doing I must equally betray myself; and I have not started upon my expedition with any intention of abandoning it through my own fault. I will write an order for his ransom to one who will not fail to pay it."

"To the Count of Riesenberg?" asked Martin, suspiciously.

"No, fool! to the Empress. Will you dare to trifle now, or to suppose that I would?"

Martin shrank before the young girl's passionate manner, and the lofty name of her protectress.

"I have no use for the accursed heathen, alive or dead," he answered; "and you had best pray, lady, that he may not yet cause you to repent that you ever saw him."

"Have the goodness to attend to your own prayers," was the reply; "for in my opinion, if you expect them to be answered this side of purgatory, you must be more in earnest about them than you have ever yet been."

The lay-brother turned aside, grinding his teeth with rage; and Ozias seized the moment to whisper,—

"The paper! my paper, lady!"

"You will let the Jew have his cap, I suppose?"

"Certainly, noble lady."

Ozias stepped forward and picked it up, then, returning to his former position, showed his protectress that the hem had been severed.

"There was a paper in this cap," she said. "What have you done with it?"

"I have laid it between the leaves of my breviary; for it is undoubtedly some foul spell for the injury of good Christians."

"Will you sell it to me?"

"The saints forbid, lady, that I should expose you to the perils of witchcraft. No, no: it goes to the holy father, the vicar-general."

"But it concerns me more than him. Will you sell it to me? If it is witchcraft or sorcery, you may as well burn it now as hereafter,—as well here as in Nuremberg."

"But it may concern the interests of the Church or State."

"Neither Church nor State will pay fifty silver crowns for it."

"Ah! it must be worth a great deal, then!"

"I tell you it concerns me, and I am willing to pay that sum for it. By the time you get back to Nuremberg it will be worth nothing to either of us."

The prudent servant of the vicar-general pondered.

"At least you can let me see it."

He produced it from the breviary where it was ensconced, as if the combined weight of Latinity and religion must crush any evil that might be contained in it.

Whatever other deceit brother Martin might indulge his genius in exercising, his superstitious fears were clearly honest: he thought it highly probable that the tiny scrap of parchment might ignite between his fingers. No such disaster, however, ensued: still, he crossed himself and muttered an exorcism, as he saw the sinful recklessness with which the countess received and examined the cabalistic signs.

"Fifty crowns of silver for it."

Martin consulted his companions, and returned in a minute or so with their consent.

"And I can burn this?" she asked.

"Burn it? for the Virgin's sake, no!" he responded, with horror. "It might carry us all off to perdition in its flames."

"That would be only a few years' anticipation to some of us. However, let me pay you for it, and then it will endanger only myself. Your writing-materials, Berethold."

The Bohemian produced them with reluctance, and Ludmila wrote a request to her royal mistress for the sum she had promised.

"And now get to a safe distance, you who are afraid; tell your beads; and, if I can raise a flame, we'll soon see what sort of fireworks these characters will produce."

Martin retreated in undisguised dismay, and, followed by the men-at-arms, hurried up the first ascent of the rampart, probably under the impression that he was thus nearer to heaven and to safety. Ludmila's ringing laugh accompanied this illustration of the *saute qui peut*.

"Now, old friend, will you strike a light for me?"

She addressed the minstrel; but the Jew answered by producing from his pouch a small phial, into which he introduced a sliver of dry wood prepared for the purpose. It blazed instantly, to the increased horror of the Germans, as they watched from their perch, and somewhat even to the surprise of the more enlightened Bohemian. The young girl, however, approached the parchment to the flame, and watched it steadily as it shrivelled, blackened, and became a mere glutinous lump; nor dropped it until the secret, whatever it might be, had vanished past discovery. Those who had fled then returned, greatly surprised that no rumblings in sky or earth, no frightful apparitions of fiery snakes or "goblins grim," had attended the rites.

"That account is well settled," said the countess to Martin. "We will next proceed to the Jew's ransom."

She had acquired very apt and decided business-habits very suddenly. But this was her nature; to avoid care and trouble if possible; to dream out her life in the dance, or on horseback; in ranging through her native forests, or over

her harp,—all that she did was but food for dreams of future romance. Yet, when roused to act, she adapted herself as it were intuitively to the exertion required, and performed it as fully and faithfully as if it had been a long and serious study.

"I will give you," she continued, "one hundred crowns of gold. That is enough for a Jew."

"One hundred fagots would be my price for him," muttered Berethold.

"Ah, noble lady, you mistake: Jews are worth in money more than Christians, since they can turn any thing they please into gold by their enchantments."

"Nonsense! if they had such power to make gold, they would have power to keep it. I have already paid you well: be content with what I now offer. Besides, we may find more Jews on the road."

"Now, the saints forbid!" groaned the minstrel.

"I must consult them again," returned the brother, turning to the soldiers, who readily agreed.

"Very well. I will, then, give each an order for his share of it. Which of those men do you intend to send with the Jew?"

"The younger."

"Understand, then, that I write for his share thus: that it is to be paid him when he presents this Jew—Ozias he is called—to her Majesty the Empress, and when Anna, my friend, who has had dealings with him and therefore knows him, shall acknowledge his identity. I will pay, but not trust you. Call the man hither."

The trooper approached, and Ludmila held out to him—with the scrap of parchment on which she had written—a tiny, emblematical ring, well known to the Empress and to Anna.

"On arriving at Nuremberg, you will ask at the castle for Anna, the orphan, under the charge of Father Matthias Ja-

now. Send her this ring, and she will see you : you will then receive your wages. I have now secured your safety as far as may be," she added to Ozias. "Say not that you encountered me in danger or captivity, for I do not choose that my purposes should be foiled both by foes and friends ; and my word is pledged not to betray these men, who release you at my desire. The same God is with us both. Go."

The brave young girl felt her voice growing thick despite her best efforts, and dared say no more. Ozias was nearly as much moved internally ; but his self-command of years and experience was almost beyond disturbance.

"Doubt not, noble youth," he said, careful of the presence of the troopers, "that the God of Israel has us both in his keeping. With him is deliverance. It is idle to speak of gratitude here ; but you know if I can remember a benefit."

He took his beast by the bridle ; the man-at-arms bundled up his portion of the booty, resumed such portions of his armor as he had laid aside for convenience, saddled his horse, and, after receiving from brother Martin sufficient money for his journey, with a careless nod to his friend, and an imprecation, ordering the Jew to follow, he departed.

Though it was also the lay-brother's intention to retrace his steps with his prize, it was equally his intention to afford those who had left, no clew to his future course.

"I will keep on yet a little farther to the north," he said to the Bohemian. "You will guide us if you can, as well as you have heretofore done," he added, with a malicious smile ; "and, if I catch you playing me false, the consequences be on your own head."

The old man replied only by a disdainful glance. He was too much occupied by his anxieties and anger about his young lord to pay much heed to any thing so insignificant as the lay-brother was in his eyes, but for that jewel—an heirloom, won from a Saracen in single fight by a Rabenstein during the

last Crusade, and now in the hands of such a creature as Martin—he trembled with rage.

The young countess was sorely beset by distressing and humiliating thoughts. In parting from the Jew she felt as if losing her only hold on the friends she had left, although her position was no worse than before his arrival. Albert's anxiety to join the Knights of St. John, that he might shake her off forever by the vows of celibacy, stung her love and pride almost to mortal agony, but quickened her resolve to carry out her undertaking. She wrung her clasped hands convulsively, while she murmured between her teeth a solemn vow that he should repent this insult, though it cost her life to effect it, and then—A thousand incoherent fancies followed this *then*; she sprang up, with her lips pale and trembling, her eyes full of an unnatural light, and, walking with a rapid, energetic step to brother Martin, asked him abruptly and sternly how long he intended to trifle in this manner: whatever disposition he was directed to make of her, she ordered him to do it at once. The unfortunate servant of the Church felt exceedingly like a man who has been deluded into taking the charge of a tame tigress: his glance shrank and wandered before the dilated orbs that lowered upon him.

"At your pleasure, noble lady," he replied, with humility.

Ludmila made a motion to Berethold, which he obeyed by saddling the horses. Martin and the remaining trooper made ready their own. The young girl flung herself across Eblis with the dexterity of a well-trained page. The lay-brother stared at this; for the saddle constructed particularly for women was common enough among persons of rank. In fact, all his observations kept him in a state of doubt and annoyance as to whether he was not under some strange and vexatious mistake in the identity of the person he had seized. Despite her slender, flexible figure, her eminently graceful attitudes and gestures, he was as terribly puzzled

as she desired, by every thing she had done and said since he had forced himself upon her acquaintance. The soldier, on the contrary, showed himself entirely unsuspicious that the prisoner was any other than an unruly boy. "How should she escape from these wretches?" was her impatient thought, as the party rode down the northern slope from the castle. She was sufficiently angry and desperate to imagine that she could push her undesirable escort down the precipices that yawned on either side, if opportunity could be found. The minstrel's brain was also busy, and, luckily, more to the purpose. His principal vexation was about the clasp, and how to convey to his charge an intimation that she should question Martin about it. He found an opportunity when the party halted to dine; and the moment they resumed their route, the countess, resolute to possess the jewel for more reasons than one, commenced her attack. Brother Martin was the more ready to listen to her as he felt himself already somewhat in her power; so he decided to be as obliging as possible at present, with a mental reservation for the future. The bargain was speedily struck, and, while Ludmila hid the heirloom in her vest, the lay-brother secured, with equal satisfaction, the written promise of the Countess of Riesenbergh for the requisite number of gold-pieces. A significant nod and smile soon assured Berethold that the affair was settled. He, meantime, had been busy in keeping the soldier's hair almost on end with fearful stories of the evil spirits who watched over the treasures of the mountains, and had brought him, finally, to such an ecstasy of terror that he would have consented to endure the question by water,—the severest form in which he could imagine it,—any thing, to have got out of these accursed glens, when he saw the shadows lengthening, and the sun disappearing behind the western heights. Snugly ensconced in a little nook of the worst reputation in that region, was a group of huts, the

dwellers of which labored under the suspicion of being somewhat heretical,—partly, perhaps, from choosing to live in a spot of such ill renown, partly because some of them were evidently of foreign birth, and often spoke together in a tongue in which the native peasants could recognise no affinity to their own dialect.

In this place Berethold proposed to pass the night; and it would go hard with him, he thought, if he could not hit on some scheme, and find some assistance to disembarass himself and his charge of their unwelcome attendants. The Bohemians, generally, were not among the most dutiful servants of the Church; and the minstrel, naturally penetrating and independent, had travelled much, seen clearly, and thought for himself. His profession, too, was not a very orthodox one,—some of its most distinguished sons, from the days of the renowned Walter von der Vogelweide, having a favorite theme in the corruptions of the Church, in which their humbler brethren were not slow to sympathize, more especially when they found these corruptions personally troublesome. Berethold, therefore, had been continually growing less orthodox since his acquaintance with the Vicar-General of the Dominicans, and now there was not a single saint in the calendar to whom he would have offered a candle's end for help, unless the said saint had appeared in the body at the head of a respectable number of the peasants of Rabenstein. What terrible satires, he thought, he would compose and sing, should he ever find himself free again! Full of such fancies, he guided the party towards a narrow defile, where all had to dismount and proceed on foot. Berethold went first, leading his own horse and that of his lady. The others followed, with many a rueful look at the huge walls of rock that towered on one side and the threatening gulfs that yawned on the other. At the foot of the declivity lay the little hamlet the minstrel sought. With a readiness

which showed him familiar with the spot, he led the way to a particular cot among the group, and, in a loud, important tone, called on the inmates to open for the servant of the reverend father the Vicar-General of the Dominicans and Grand Inquisitor. This singular summons was answered, not only by those to whom it was addressed, but by all the men, women, and children of the place, most of whom imagined nothing less than that this formidable announcement was a prelude to an extensive human roast, of which they were to furnish the materials. Martin gave his guide a glance of fury in return for this excessive respect; but the latter, nothing daunted, continued his endeavors to impress on the master of the hut the importance of his guest and the necessity of making unheard-of efforts for his accommodation. The peasant ushered them with civility beneath his roof, and, directing the minstrel to follow him with the horses, opened a coarse door, which disclosed a natural aperture in the rock, the rough floor of which had been smoothed with some care and rendered less hard by earth thrown in upon it. This served as a stable; and here Berethold found good store of straw and hay, which, in addition to the bag of grain he carried on the crupper, promised a comfortable repast to the new lodgers.

Here, too, were some kids just retired for their night's slumber, one of which was the victim doomed to fall in honor of the Holy Inquisition. The minstrel aided in all the duties of the entertainment, ran around from hut to hut to purvey such things as he chose to fancy were wanting, and thus managed to exchange a few sentences in Bohemian with his host. During the supper other peasants, with their wives and daughters, gathered around, with timid, awkward curiosity, to stare at the strangers; for it was not often that their lonely retreat was entered by the wayfarer. Their ignorance and simplicity quieted the lay-brother's

fears of treachery; while the trooper felt convinced that the sight alone of his spear was sufficient to keep them all in awe. So the two revelled in the glory of their importance, and told wonderful tales of the world beyond the mountains, each after his vocation,—brother Martin of miracles and burnings of Jews and heretics, and his companion of the battles his single arm had won, the booty he had amassed, and the hearts he had broken. The meat was excellent, the wine strong, the young girls pretty; and even the *frater*, in honor to these last, lifted the flagon to his lips rather oftener than prudence would have dictated. The mountaineers in their turn began to feel at ease, and to contribute their share of jest, legend and adventure.

“I could tell a story of this very spot,” said the minstrel, after a while, “if I thought Moritz would like it.”

Moritz, the master of the cottage, laughed, and bade him say on.

“I have no fear of the spirits of the mine,” he continued; “for I do not envy them the jewels with which they light their caverns. I would not bury myself for twenty-four hours from the light of the heavens for the most glorious carbuncle in the bowels of the Fichtelgebirge, and ask no richer jewels than the grass, grain, and fruits with which God blesses the top of it.”

Berthold smiled his assent to the propriety of this remark, and began the most bewildering and alarming tale that his memory and imagination could supply, during which the lay-brother and his companion poured down fresh draughts of wine to reassure their courage; and, whether or not it answered that purpose, it assured them sleep.

Not long after midnight, a fierce light burst on the eyes of the startled sleepers, followed by a loud explosion, while a whole troop of some objects, decidedly wearing hoofs and horns, rushed through the hut, butting and trampling the be-

wildered and shrieking inmates. Brother Martin and the trooper, from the position they had chosen to occupy as guardians of the door, were the greatest sufferers by fright, and bruises. How they got out of the hut they could not tell; but the inhabitants of the other cottages, collected by the strange uproar, found the brother with his face buried in the wet grass, and his companion not far from him, swearing he had been thrown from a catapult. But, meantime, where were the old minstrel and the boy? Careful search was made without the hut, and at last brother Martin, in his desperation, was fain to lead an exploring party within. The stable-door lay flat and scorched; there was a strong, strange, sulphureous smell around: but neither man, boy, nor horse was found.

* * * * *

"Rabenstein!" ejaculated the minstrel, as he and his charge emerged from a dark and narrow defile into a broad, green meadow, through which a branch of the Eger glided with a song of rural cheer. He pointed, as he spoke, to a spur of the great mountain-chain they had traversed, on whose giddy heights frowned the gloomy and almost impracticable towers well named the Raven's Nest. A strange mingling of emotions thrilled the heart of the listener; a joy that was half fear; the tenderness and the pride of a true woman struggling for the sway that neither could maintain continuously; and blending with all, yet more powerful than either, was the true modesty that filled her eyes with tears, and sent the warm blood to throb wildly in her neck and temples and to glow even through the dye that stained her cheeks. Around the foot of the cone-shaped height were scattered the lowly huts of the serfs, where little brown, half-naked children were shouting in glee, the sweet, ringing voices of childhood echoed in even sweeter, clearer notes from the gray rocks above. At the foot of the immediate height which sustained the castle, a waterfall kept watch and ward, dashing

its spray upon the intruders, as in half sport, half menace. Above rose perpendicular and apparently impenetrable masses of ivy-clad rock, from which here and there shot a tree, whose luxuriant foliage waved over the rugged pile whence it received its nurture, like a nodding plume above the brow of a giant. Berethold alighted; and, without waiting for further direction, Ludmila did the same. Leading both horses, the old man advanced, and, thrusting his hand among the tangled vines, opened a hidden door, which fell back with a harsh, grating sound and discovered an aperture sufficient to admit a dismounted rider with his steed. As the countess stepped forward into this abyss of darkness, the hoarse, fierce cry of an eagle sounded far above her. Was it a warning of future woe awaiting her impulsive rashness?

"Now, lady, your hand," the minstrel said, as he closed the door: "this is a dismal way for one unaccustomed to its windings."

But soon Ludmila's eyes discerned a dusky gleam in this singular avenue; and in five minutes more they emerged upon a narrow platform, with the moat and drawbridge of the fortification immediately before them. A lowered bridge and a raised portcullis, with a sleepy warder lounging idly beneath it, expressed the state of things at the fortress of Rabenstein after a manner to which the daughter of Count Otto of Riesenbergr was utterly unaccustomed. Her stare was answered by a sigh from the old Bohemian; but he moved on, without a word, through the arched gateway, and, crossing the courtyard, led the way first to the stables.

"Eblis is too whimsical in his tastes to be intrusted to a groom," he said: "we must care for him ourselves, before I introduce you within." He proceeded to the cares to which that fastidious quadruped was accustomed,—Ludmila, with ready wit, affecting great reluctance to receive such attention from him, and parading the little assistance she rendered in

the most effective manner. This done, he addressed her with,—

“Come, young sir, follow me now, and I will show you such hospitality as Rabenstein affords.”

The poor girl's limbs shook with agitation. Her guide gave her a glance at once of warning and encouragement, and continued:—“See, now, how much better are old limbs than young ones: the day's journey has quite exhausted you. But lean on me; good cheer and a night's rest will restore you.”

It was nothing new to see the wayfarer ascend those heights for food, shelter, and repose; for, morose as was Zahera, the duties of hospitality were rigidly performed beneath his roof. So the dark, slender boy passed on almost unnoticed, and was conducted by her old protector to a range of sleeping-apartments especially reserved for travellers.

“Rest here,” he said, “free from all care. The evening meal will be ready shortly, when I will bring you refreshments myself; and then we will talk further. Meantime, I must make my report to the baron.”

Left alone, Ludmila's whole system was in too irritable a state to permit her to rest. She endeavored to occupy herself by gazing from the windows, or rather loop-holes, commanding the southern and western exposure. From the first she looked, beyond and below the singular natural avenue by which she had entered, upon broad, smiling meadows, luxuriant fields of grain, bending and rising again, with a billowy motion, as the summer breeze swept over them; upon vineyards, whose drooping stems and beautiful leaves clung with jealous care above their fruit, as if hoping to secure their inspiring treasures from the practised eye and grasping hand of the vintager. On the west, and within an arrow's flight, arose gray cliffs crowned with nodding woods; here and there were gentle slopes, not inaccessible to

the laborer's footsteps, and rich with the rewards of his toil; higher yet, rugged steeps, on which herds of goats were visible, some browsing industriously on the scant and tender herbage, some springing from rock to rock with strong, sure bounds, some standing upon the brink of the mountain-parapet and gazing downward with an air of philosophic meditation, as if wondering in which of the embowered caves below the god Pan secreted himself from the rays of the summer sun; while the kidlings sported in frantic *pirouettes* with a grace and precision that a whirling dervise might have envied. Above all towered the unconquerable region of winter, its pellucid glaciers gleaming beneath the western light, like a fairy-palace of crystal and gems.

The varied beauty, the rural peace, of the scene shed its soothing influence upon the gazer. Insensibly the first smile which had lighted her face that day stole over it; pictures as magical as the sun's light on the ice-walls began to replace the gloomy views of the present and future before which she had been trembling; and when Berethold returned she was again the Countess Ludmila of the Imperial court, full of hope, energy, and merry mischief. A soft light yet lingered over the earth, though within all was obscure, when a tap was heard at the door, and the young girl opened it to her protector.

"Now, dear lady," said the minstrel, "I will give you a supper very different from our feasts by the way-side." And he proceeded, with a childlike pleasure and alacrity, to cut up a pheasant and pour wine from a silver flagon.

Ludmila did full justice to his skill as a caterer, while he looked on with the happiness of a parent in her appetite and her renewed cheerfulness.

"Next to show you something more of the Raven's Nest," he said, as she concluded her meal.

She shrank back. "Ah, Father Bercthold, you make me tremble again!"

"Never fear, my child: you will see none of the ravens, I assure you. Not an inhabitant of the place but myself would venture where I shall lead you first to be the lord of it," he added, in a saddened tone.

Taking a cresset, he led the way through a long, narrow passage and up a winding, break-neck sort of staircase, where he took a key from his girdle and unlocked the first door they reached, while his charge stood actually shivering with apprehension.

"You *do* tremble," he said, kindly. "But for long years no hand but mine has touched this door, no foot crossed this threshold. It is guarded by memories too woeful for its master to brave, too full of superstitious terror for his dependants to encounter. Trust me, we are as solitary here as we should be on the highest peak of the mountains."

To reassure her, however, he closed the door and locked it within. It was a long, narrow, gloomy apartment, hung with tapestries embroidered in grim figures, depicting monstrous legends and traditions of dire deeds of slaughter, constituting the glories of the lords of Rabenstein of past ages.

In one corner stood a bedstead almost as massive as the bridal couch of Ulysses, though of less illustrious workmanship; for the days when heroes were their own cabinet-makers were long past—if, indeed, they had ever been—in German life; heavy hangings canopied it,—of rich stuffs, discolored and decaying by dampness and dust. On a table opposite rested a Venetian mirror in a richly-carved frame, around which stood several caskets, beautifully inlaid, of Italian and Indian skill. Her conductor opened them reverently, inviting her attention to the contents; and all the various gems in which the Bohemian mines are rich gleamed on Ludmila's sight. He selected from among them a diamond circlet, and,

placing it upon her head, held up the light, that she could survey herself in the mirror, and then opened an immense oaken chest, in which were stored robes of every material, from the floating silks and gauzes of India to the velvets of Italy.

"Pardon me, Father Berethold," said Ludmila, "but I should scarce have expected to find so much taste and magnificence here, so remote from the pomp of great cities."

"She for whom all this care was lavished was deeply loved, although——"

He paused abruptly, with a heavy sigh.

His charge forbore to notice his emotion, and busied herself in selecting certain articles of dress and jewelry, which the old man carefully took, then closed the chest and caskets, and led the way silently and sorrowfully from this desolated shrine of wealth and luxury. Ludmila followed him down another staircase, as precipitous as the first, through long and almost labyrinthine passages, characteristic of the fortified buildings of the age, until, after the unlocking of several doors and another descent, she found herself in a low, narrow space, where the confined, earthy vapors almost stopped her breath, and the cold ground on which she stepped sent a chill through her frame.

"This is a secret way below the ramparts, for the purpose of unobserved communication with the valley below," the minstrel explained. "Except the baron, I suppose no one now living is aware of its existence. And he will never enter it again," he added, gloomily, after a pause.

There was now a gradually-descending subterranean way before them; then Berethold opened another door, and, holding up the light, showed her that a natural wall of rock screened the entrance for several feet. Gliding carefully along, she found herself in a moment in the free space, and, drawing a long sigh of relief, inhaled with exquisite

pleasure the fresh, soft air of the summer evening, fragrant with the odors which the dew had distilled from herb and flower. Berethold cautiously extinguished the cresset, and took her hand to guide her over the rough, descending path; as they threaded the meadow at the base of the overhanging rocks, the rushing waters on the right fell on her ear amid the stillness like the murmur of fairy voices chanting homage to their queen.

"It is the Eger," said the minstrel, "whose source is in these hills. Its song forms my nightly serenade when I can escape from the dull walls above to the shelter of my own humble cot, which is close upon its banks."

After a walk of some fifteen minutes' duration,—for both were too much wearied to move with their usual vigor,—Berethold arrested his companion's steps.

"Here, four years ago," he said, in a low voice, "happened one of those mysterious murders to which all Germany is subject, and of which none dare complain,—a judgment of the Secret Tribunal."

"Four years!" repeated Ludmila, struck by the time named. "Tell me more of it, Father Berethold."

"There is no more to be told than the eye could gather," he replied. "In the middle of the afternoon, a cry reached us that there was a murdered man at the mouth of the glen. High and low hurried here and beheld the victim, his face upturned to the all-seeing sun, one hand pressed upon his breast, as if to call on the great light to scan and bear witness to its righteousness!"

"And what sort of man was he?" persevered the questioner.

"Beyond the ordinary size, with almost massive chest and limb, and a face suited to them,—the face of one who, when every other fled, would stand as composedly in the breach as he lay with his death-wound.

Handsome?"

"Yes. Light hair, slightly curling, a broad brow, eyes deep set, nose rather straight, lips moderately full and parted with a sort of smile which seemed to say this fate had been hanging over him so long, that it was a relief to be rid of any further anticipation of it."

The listener shivered; for every word carried with it a conviction that this description identified the father of her friend Anna. Conscious, however, of the danger of indiscretion in political secrets, she wisely kept silence, resolving to gain what further information was possible when she should feel more self-command. She merely said,—

"I am very weary, good friend. Let us hurry on, that I may rest."

The guide answered by moving forward, following now the course of the river, and paused before a hut at the foot of a huge cliff. Leading his charge into the darkness within, he whispered her to remain quiet for a few moments, and withdrew.

In ten minutes a door at the side was opened, showing another division of the place; and the minstrel, with the cresset relighted, appeared, followed by a female, something past the middle age, in the peasant-dress of the country.

"This is my daughter," said Berethold,—“who loves her young lord as I do, and who understands all our arrangements.”

Martha came forward with a simple reverence, and kissed the hand of the countess, who, looking keenly into her face, felt that she could trust her.

Berethold then saying, “Sleep now in peace, and hope every thing for the morrow,” withdrew.

Martha prepared the couch for her honored guest, fastened the outer door of the hut, informed her that there was no occupant but herself of the other part, and also retired.

Thankful for the opportunity of repose, Ludmila uttered a short but fervent prayer for those she loved, and flung herself gratefully upon the thick bed of fragrant heath. Her beautiful eyes were already heavy with sleep, which seized her entirely, without affording her time for thought upon the future; and no vision of the night told her how little space separated her from her handsome, noble, yet eccentric betrothed, Albert of Rabenstein.

* * * * *

Unconsciously to himself, every thought of Albert of Rabenstein was awayed, every act directed, by Father Cyrillus. Naturally strong in impulse and decision, those qualities had been subdued into an indolence, an irresolution, in the affairs of life, galling beyond measure to the once formidable Zahera, who could recognise no trait of himself in his heir. Not until he knew Father Cyrillus's opinion could he resolve on any thing; and this arose from no want of judgment on his part, from no lack of courage or of generosity, but merely from the habit in which the subtle monk had trained him of yielding always to his will. In his mental existence he was a hero, in action a tool. Well was it that the monk loved his pupil,—that the views with which he inspired him were just, the aims lofty. To join the chivalrous order of St. John; to devote his powers to the true honor of his country, to its nationalization, to its freedom from the foreign despotism which, under the mask of religion, was spreading and rooting itself wide and deep into the political organization of the great Empire, and, through that, twining itself insidiously with every employment, with all social intercourse, with the sacred life of the domestic sphere,—these were the objects to which Father Cyrillus had trained his pupil, and which Albert had embraced with all the fervor of his soul.

The adventurous heiress of Riesenbergr was joined by Bere-

thold, as she was enjoying the delicious influences of the next morning at the door of her hut. The old man saw, by the arch glance and smile which greeted him, that all her accustomed brilliancy and energy were restored.

"Now for the first part of our mystery," he said,—“a much finer, and to much better purpose, than the mysteries I have seen the monks produce in my travels.”

Going into his daughter's division of the hut, he reappeared with a lighted torch.

“Be cautious now,” he addressed his charge, “that not a sound escapes your lips.”

Ludmila nodded, and followed him. Her apartment was of extreme length, and its farthest wall was formed by what seemed a solid mass of rock. The minstrel placed the torch in her hands, directing her how to hold it for his accommodation: its rays fell upon an irregular, and apparently natural, crevice in the stone. With no great effort, he displaced that portion of it marked out by the fissure, revealing an aperture sufficient for a large man to pass without inconvenience. Entering first, he extended his hand to assist his charge safely through, and then, after replacing the cunning portal, held the torch on high, that she might view the unknown regions into which she had been tempted. The light was flashed back upon her dazzled eyes from countless tall and massive columns, seemingly incrustated with brilliant gems: the very court of fairy-land seemed to open before her. Overhead, the glittering stalactites clothed the roof with arches, blended like the interlacing of boughs in the forest, with festoons, with leaves and flowers, with airy and grotesque forms, produced in Nature's frolic mood, all wrought into fret-work, as if some rare and zealous artist had traced his bright and fitful fancies there. From a long avenue of crystal pillars they emerged upon a temple, gleaming beneath the glare of the torch with mother-of-pearl and gems, like a

shrine created by Nature for the gorgeous divinity of Paphos. Again their progress was arrested by another wonder, in the shape of a huge column some six feet in circumference, and towering towards the roof of the cavern far above the heads of the gazers. Berethold threw the glare of the torch full upon it, showing it beaming pale and pure like alabaster, while the crystals with which it was studded flashed back all the brilliant hues of Bohemia's jewelled treasures.

Behind this glittering wonder rose the extreme wall of the cavern, its hard, gray hue screened by the milk-white stalagmitic sheet that fell over it. The minstrel pointed out some steps hewn in the rock, at the foot of which he carefully deposited his torch. He ascended them: the countess followed. A few paces farther, and a wall of rock impeded their course, though not incrustated like the first. The minstrel turned again. Here the gleam of the torch no longer followed them; but Berethold proceeded like one accustomed to the path. Suddenly, amid the darkness, the sound of voices reached their ears, and one of them, full, mellow, earnest in its tones,—to whom could it belong but Albert of Rabenstein? Ludmila trembled; but the minstrel still held her hand; and, somewhat supported thus, she exerted all her strength to control her agitation. Her eyes, now accustomed to the gloom, discovered a faint light in advance; and Berethold then drew his charge farther, that she might observe the communication between the two caverns. The wall of rock behind which they had been screened terminated abruptly on the right hand, while on the left arose another huge mass, which, diverging a little as it stretched across the front cave, formed thus a gallery similar to the one in which she stood, yet barely wide enough to admit her own slender proportions. Satisfied that she fully understood the position, her guide led her again to the colossal pillar.

"Be silent now," he whispered, "and I will show you yet another wonder."

He drew his knife and struck the column slightly. A low, musical note answered the blow; but Ludmila was at first more inclined to be frightened than delighted. As the vibration died away, Berethold repeated the stroke more earnestly: again and again the unearthly tone rang and the echoes repeated it, until the cave seemed filled with the music of fairy-bells. He then led away his amazed listener, with a gratified and meaning smile, which promised future explanation.

As was intended, the music of the jewelled cave had reached other ears than those of the amazed countess. The young recluse of Rabenstein heard it, modified by distance and the involutions of the gallery.

Not only the superstitions, but the science and religion, of the age, taught the belief in supernatural existences of earth and air, as well as in those of the penal gulfs below; taught the communications of all with human beings, sometimes forced by the power which man's nearer image to his Maker gave him, sometimes sought by the different classes of elves and demons, for the purpose of obtaining an evil sway over the being whose superior destinies they envied and desired to mar.

By nature morbidly imaginative, Albert was peculiarly sensitive to all impressions of the vague and unknown; and as the sweet, penetrating, metallic notes floated around him, he started from his abstraction, to wonder what and where were they. Such sound never rang from minstrel's harp or hunter's horn: now swelling, now fading, they seemed to pervade the cavern with a mysterious life, until at last the listener's brain swam in a delirious ecstasy of superstitious delight and awe. It was but short-lived, this music of another sphere. A peal, louder, more vibrating than the first, closed the

aerial symphony; and the bewildered victim of this natural magic stood motionless, breathless, in the hope of its recurrence, but in vain. After a few minutes of silence, Albert began to think that for ages it had been believed that unearthly music heralded the approach of unearthly beings. Shuddering, he crossed himself and murmured an exorcism. Was he exposed to the assaults and temptations of the powers of evil? And, if so, why? The moment was rather more propitious for Father Cyrillus than for his opponents; for, in answering his own questions, Albert naturally enough reverted to the discontent with the monk's advice which had of late influenced him, to the secret rebellion against his authority which had been stirring in his soul, and to his perusal of profane books, of whose works Father Cyrillus would inevitably have built a sacrificial pile for instant ignition.

His familiarity with Petrarca and other profane writers arose before him. He was conscious, too, that something of his intense desire to enter the sphere for which his preceptor destined him, to rush into action, was as much the effect of an irritable and inexplicable loneliness to which he had lately found himself liable, as to the pious enthusiasm which he used, and still supposed he ought, to feel, to the exclusion of every other emotion. Worse than all, he had lately caught himself endeavoring to recall the portrait of Ludmila of Rieesenbrg, which the wary monk had had the prevision to place in the baron's apartments, where no inducement would bring his pupil. Truly, for an aspirant to the honors of the Church militant, Albert's state of mind was not the most agreeable; and, with all these enormities pressing on his memory, he sprang up, snatched his bow, and, calling a pet deer-hound which lay crouched at the entrance, took with hasty steps the favorite, because the wildest and least frequented, path among rocks.

He was sauntering moodily along, when the sudden

straining of the dog at the leash in which he held him called his attention. Within an arrow's flight, on the brow of a gentle slope before him, stood a stately stag, browsing with his head towards the east, whence the wind came. To fit the shaft to his bow, to take sure and deadly aim, was but the work of an instant for a practised woodman like Albert. But, ere he could loose the bolt, a blue mist suddenly enveloped the scene: the stag seemed to vanish: and, on the same spot stood, or rather hovered,—it appeared to the beholder,—a female form. The long garment which seemed to float like clouds, the hair which fell in waves around the shoulders and waist, the arms so gracefully extended, the face, which, though too distant for the features to be distinguished, yet produced an indefinable sensation of beauty in the awe-struck gazer,—all colored by the azure vapor to its own celestial hue, produced a picture of such ethereal loveliness as might have bewildered and enchained an imagination far less active than Albert's. The bow dropped from his unnerved hands, and the dog crouched trembling at his master's feet, as if conscious of a supernatural presence. Motionless stood the vision; motionless and almost breathless remained the young man: he fancied himself actually spell-bound; and still the hound shook and whimpered in mortal fear. Once Albert thought the mysterious shape moved towards him; but on the instant the mist rolled away, and with it, as if on its wings, fled the phantom. The young enthusiast sank on his knees and crossed himself devoutly. It was clear, then, that the unearthly notes were intended for him,—a warning of the approach of evil. And this shadowy form, floating, as it were, between heaven and earth, was doubtless the emissary of the powers of darkness, whose snares were laid for his unwary soul. The very fascination it exerted over his senses proved it; for, while he stood aghast at the fearful certainty, his soul was filled with an intense longing to recall the apparition.

Should he tell Father Cyrillus? No, was his immediate decision : he would wait for some further revelation. Throwing himself at full length on the turf, he abandoned himself to all the wild sensations produced by this communication with the unknown world.

Meantime, his mysterious visitant, under the guidance of Berethold, was scudding, like a frightened hare, beneath the edge of the cliff on which her betrothed was resting, at the eastern extremity of which a narrow and tortuous declivity, hidden by dark pines and rugged fragments of rock, led to another entrance of the cavern, and thence into her hut. Here, exhausted by the excitement of the experiment she had been trying, she sank down, and sat, trembling, laughing, and crying by turns, until the minstrel grew fairly alarmed for her wits. Her next adventure thus delayed, it was past noon when Zdenko informed Father Cyrillus that a young maiden entreated speech of him. It was common enough for his scattered flock to send to him for advice and relief in sorrow or sickness. He walked to the spot where a girl stood awaiting him with drooping head, as if subdued by timidity or trouble, who, blushing and embarrassed, stood for some seconds unable to explain her errand. During this hesitation, Father Cyrillus examined her with eyes as searching as those of the vicar-general. The close-fitting peasant-dress displayed a rounded and active form, arms well turned; and the short skirt revealed limbs beautiful by nature, and developed by exercise to the muscular symmetry of a Diana. Despite the young girl's confusion, her look was so ingenuous, her smile so confiding, that the monk felt at once a singular interest in her, despite the incongruity between her costume and appearance. Her skin was too white, her hands too small, her carriage too erect, for a serf's daughter, embrowned by exposure to the elements and bent to the toils of the field. These observations seemed to produce a further association of ideas; for,

with a slight glance at Albert, not unobserved by the counterfeit peasant, Father Cyrillus directed her to follow him within the lodge.

"Now, daughter," he said, "in what can I aid you? You seem troubled."

In this there was no counterfeit; for Ludmila found it no slight trial to stand thus before the churchman, whose penetration was evident enough. Fortunately, she had blended so much truth with the history prepared for him as to carry her skilfully through the windings of its fiction.

"Reverend father," she replied, "I came from a village of Franconia to entreat your advice and your protection; for I had heard of you,—heard that you were kind and just and holy."

"Nay, daughter, nay! We may all, indeed, be kind; but there is but One just, but One holy."

"I speak what I have been told. I am an orphan; for, although my father, as I hope, still lives, he is far away, with the knight whom he serves, in the army of our gracious lord the Emperor."

"And what can have given a child like you courage to stray so far?"

"When my father left me, he was happy in the thought that he had betrothed me to a youth of my own station, who loved me; but neither he nor I knew (what I have since found, to my sorrow) that the knight he follows entertains what he calls 'love' for me: and, oh, good father, forgive me that I say it! but the priest in whom we all trusted, favors the knight's designs. He has persuaded my betrothed to abandon me and enter the Church; he has striven, too, to divert my affections from him I looked on as my future husband, and to induce me to think of Sir Henry, who can only love me wickedly; and, that I might be entirely at his mercy, he has insinuated reports of heresy against me, until I was

neglected and looked on with suspicion by my nearest friends and relations."

"Sir Henry?" repeated Father Cyrillus, noting that name in connection with Franconia: "Sir Henry?"

"Of Lichtenstein," added Ludmila.

Though half expecting this reply, the questioner started violently, and a frown so angry and portentous darkened his brow that the countess involuntarily shrank back and grew a shade paler. He observed the effect his emotion had produced.

"I have frightened you, poor child!" he said. "Sit down, and we will talk more of this. You see now I am not holy, for I can be angry. So you have heard of me before? Tell me how."

"My father was here four years ago with Count Otto of Riesenbergl—"

"And Henry of Lichtenstein. Ah, viper!" he murmured, between his teeth.

"You know him? You have not forgotten him?"

"Forgotten him? Never! I understand him too well!"

"And you can pity me?"

"I can pity any one around whom he winds his coils. You must have dreaded him indeed to venture so far to escape him."

"I was desperate! I was mad! My father absent, my lover's faith perverted! Ah, father, was it not cruel to turn him from me,—my only protector?"

As she uttered this appeal, Ludmila's eyes filled with natural tears; and she kept them fixed on the monk with a look so earnest and so touching that his own shrank beneath it. What he supposed her chance shot had struck home.

"You pity me," she exclaimed, following up the impression she had made. "You *do* pity me; and you will try to restore him to me. Think, father,—think of all I must have

suffered ere I fled from my home and braved the distance and the dangers to ask your help. Think of me, young, ignorant, and helpless, in the power of a wicked knight and more wicked priest, and promise to save me and restore him who is more than life to me !”

She seized his hand in the agitation she felt from the consciousness that she was indeed pleading her own cause.

“My child, my child,” replied Father Cyrillus, in sincere sympathy with the pleader, “I can protect you ; but how am I to change the will of this youth, or check the influence of his confessor ?”

“It is not his will, father. It is the will of an artful man, working upon the obedience and superstition of one accustomed to look up to him as the highest earthly authority.”

Again the monk’s eye drooped ; and this time a slight flush mounted to his thin cheek. A secret consciousness annoyed him. After a moment’s pause, he looked keenly into the young girl’s face, and said,—

“How is it that you, the daughter of a vassal of Sir Henry of Lichtenstein, use language so superior to the station in which you belong ?”

“I was reared in the household of Count Otto and about the person of his daughter.”

“And, with such friends, why do you seek me ?”

“Alas, good father, the count is with the Emperor and the Countess Ludmila is at Nuremberg.”

“And why are you not with the countess ?”

“Could I leave my betrothed ?” The swimming eyes and tremulous tone affected the monk more than he would have been willing to own.

“How is it,” he continued to ask, “that you speak the Czechen tongue like ourselves ?”

“Our gracious lady, the wife of Count Otto, was a Bohe-

hemian. But she is dead,—the beautiful, noble, and kind,—or I had never known such wrongs and such fears.”

The swimming eyes overflowed, sobs choked the trembling utterance, and the listener found himself strangely moved. Every word stirred agitating associations of the past. How many weary years had worn away since a face of such beauty had been turned towards himself in such appealing, childlike confidence,—since eyes so frank and brilliant had looked into his own,—since his native tongue had fallen on his ear from a voice so sweet and thrilling! He thought of his own fair love,—of the blight which had fallen on her bright youth and his own. Too much disturbed to continue the interview, he said,—

“My child, I will think on what you have told me and will shortly see you again. Meantime, I will place you in the charge of a trusty and kind woman, with whom you can remain in safety.”

He left her, and in a few moments returned with Bercthold, whom he directed to conduct the young stranger to his daughter's hut.

Father Cyrillus was a reformer for every one but his pupil. For him he had views for the success of which it was necessary still to retain him in the obedience required by the Church. But, if it is difficult for a man to teach what he does not believe, far more difficult is it *not* to teach what he does believe: consequently, the young dreamer of the Rabenstein had acquired from the monk's government of his flock, from the general tone of his conversation on all topics save Church discipline, an amount of heresy which he himself did not fully understand, nor his tutor suspect. This indirect teaching was strengthened from other sources. In the most secluded valley of the Eger were sheltered the descendants of a remnant of the persecuted and scattered dwellers of the Vaudois. Here they preserved inviolate “the faith delivered

to the saints." To this spot Albert had often wandered in his hunting-excursions and his moody musings. Thus he encountered the single-hearted colonists, whose intelligence, industry, and consequent independence, presented so strong a contrast to the ignorance, the degradation, the slavery, of the serfs of his native land. He loved to listen to the traditions treasured by the old men, of the days of their fathers' peace and pride in the Southern homes whence the hard hand of religious tyranny had driven them. These recitals naturally involved something of the history of the pure and simple creed for which they had suffered.

Ignorant of the familiarity of his charge with the Vaudois villagers, who knew him only as a skilful and daring hunter, Father Cyrillus, after his interview with Ludmila, decided to place the young stranger among those honest, kindly people with whom he had frequent intercourse, and who loved and confided in him, despite the apparent difference in their religious positions. If she remained at Rabenstein, it would be impossible to keep her in entire seclusion, and thus impossible to keep her from being seen by Albert. It was not so much her beauty that he feared, but that beauty was accompanied by a grace so simple, a manner at once so commanding and confiding, that for Albert, with his wild imagination, his deep feelings, his poetic temperament, to be thrown in contact with this young Franconian, was not to be risked. Her voice alone had danger in it.

While he thus pondered, Berethold and the fair dissembler were returning slowly to the cot. Unable to account for the agitation of Father Cyrillus, the minstrel was inclined to consider it a new imagination of the reciter, induced by the perturbation of her own feelings.

"No, no, Father Berethold," she replied: "I have not deceived myself. You know I went rather to see than to hear this monk; for I could not expect he would say any thing by

which I could fathom him. I have heard as well as seen enough to convince me that he has a heart."

"He has a head only."

"He has a heart—and a heart, too, for woman."

The minstrel stared in unlimited amazement and incredulity.

"You think I am too childish to penetrate so far, where you in years have learned nothing. But men cannot fathom men as women can. You say there is a mystery about Father Cyrillus. That mystery is love!"

Berethold shrugged his shoulders.

There was yet an ally to be taken into the confidence of the schemers, who, once convinced that the monk desired to make his young lord also a monk, would bestow all his pains to prevent it. This was Zdenko, who had forgotten Conrad when the delirium from his wound had ceased, but was fully conscious of Father Cyrillus's affectionate devotion, and of the brutality of his master. Both he repaid with all his energies of heart and soul: though he could as yet requite the baron but with thoughts of burning hate, which waited only opportunity to become deeds. Perfectly a machine in the hands of his preserver, his confidant in his plans, save that which condemned Albert to the solitary doom of the Church, the serf was far from suspecting this. Here he could not have followed the casuistry of the monk; for he wanted that deepest, that most fatal of wrongs, which had kindled all the strength and passion of the latter's nature into a fire as fierce and unrelenting as that with which the Moslem creed kindles hearts in the halls of Eblis. Zdenko must understand that faith to his young lord in this case involved no treason to Father Cyrillus. He could be won, and without danger of betrayal; for the monk permitted no mental reservations, no violation of an oath; it was sacred even from the confessional,—a deviation from the discipline

of Rome which would have sent a chill through the very walls of the Vatican, could the winds which swept the Böhmerwald have carried such a heresy on their wings. Berchthold had barely concluded his speculations when they encountered the serf. He entered the hut with them, and Ludmila conquered him as readily as she had the monk. The old man's eyes danced with glee as he watched Zdenko's honest and childlike heart expand beneath her bright smiles, her gay and simple talk on all things which he understood and loved. The minstrel departed with him, whispering, as he did so, "The spell is on him : he may be trusted."

The young countess sat in no small consternation during her protector's absence. "Why did she consent for her absurd secret to go further?" She remained abashed and alarmed until the minstrel's reappearance. He understood her troubled look at once.

"Rest contented, lady," he said, "I know the heart, I have trusted. Such a terrible conspiracy as we have now about my young lord ! If the vicar-general would only rid us of Father Cyrillus for a while, we would break all his meshes past mending. You have frightened the monk ; and, not daring to let you remain at Rabenstein, he means to send you to the village of the Waldenses."

The young girl turned pale.

"That will not disturb us ; for you are to live in the hut of Franz, a vine-dresser, whose son was the husband of my Martha. Poor fellow ! he has been dead some years, but the old folks love us, and will serve us as we desire. My young lord visits the village in disguise, as I found by Franz's description. So, while Father Cyrillus sends you away for fear Baron Albert should see you, (for, with all his excuses about your safety, I know that is his reason,) we will have a fine mystery with him too."

Albert spent the next day in solitary rambling through the

mountains. Towards sunset he entered the glen of the heretics. The first human object he espied was a female figure seated in a dejected attitude by the side of the stream he was about to cross. Startled by his step, Ludmila sprang up, pale with agitation. Albert also trembled; for something in the face before him recalled the aspect of his supernatural visitant. "Had she taken a new shape to insure his destruction?" He stood breathless, yet with a strange delight at his heart; and when the disguised heiress of Riesenberglifted her eyes, more pellucid from the tears which had overflowed them, he was perfectly reckless whether they were of earth or not. They were like the eyes of the phantom of the mist.

Using the privilege of his rank, Albert spoke first:—

"You are a stranger? You are troubled?"

"I am both."

"Do you seek friends and protection?"

"I have found both in this valley."

The valley of the heretics!—Ludmila understood his looks, and, in spite of her love, was amused: she felt that she had a right to this slight revenge for his contempt of Count Otto's daughter.

And that remembrance restored her pride and self-possession: she elevated her figure with an imperious air, and gave him a glance of such flashing scorn as tended to bewilder him still further, so different was it from her first aspect. She saw her advantage. "Are you of this village?" she asked.

"No: I am of Rabenstein. But the people here know me. Franz, the vine-dresser, is my friend."

"And mine. I live in his cottage."

Franz was an honest man. Albert had heard him pray, though not to the saints or the Virgin. The poor youth's conclusions, wavering between habit and common sense, were terribly contradictory.

"I am going to see Franz," he said; but neither of them moved, and, after a minute's pause, Ludmila reseated herself. The spirit of mischief was again awakening within, and she resolved to tease her betrothed still further.

Albert gazed for some moments on the bewildering stranger with the dreamy look peculiar to him when deeply interested,—gazed until her own glance softened and then fell before his, while a faint blush tinged her cheeks. These were evidences of humanity, the young baron thought; and they gave him energy to speak once more.

"You are a Bohemian?"

Ludmila shook her head.

"Yet you speak our tongue perfectly."

"Love teaches all things."

A new and uncomfortable sense of dissatisfaction passed through the hearer's mind at these words and betrayed itself on his face. He lowered his brow; and that stern melancholy which had marked it from childhood, when he was agitated or displeased, contracted it now. His betrothed compared the original with the portrait beneath whose eyes she had learned to love. How much more beautiful seemed the face and form clothed with the power of life! and how strangely her heart beat as she gazed! She felt frightened, sick, and helpless, as she thought how insecure, how slight, was her tenure over this youth, who was so entirely her master. When he lifted his glance again to hers, she was pale as the phantom he had seen by moonlight, and he thought she was about to fade away as that had done.

After a moment's pause she gathered courage.

"Who are you," she asked, "who feel so much care for a stranger?"

"I am called Albert, and am a vassal of the Lord of Rabenstein. And who are you, and why are you in this glen, so unknown as it is, or known only as the home of heretics?"

"My name is Liska; and I am here because my betrothed is of these mountains."

Again the dark look passed over the young man's brow, and again there was a silence.

"Will you tell me no more?" he asked, at last.

"It is but little. My mother was a Bohemian: she is dead. My father is a soldier: he is fighting for the Emperor. They betrothed me to a relation of my mother: this year we were to marry. I have been persecuted by a wicked knight, who at last threatened to carry me away to his castle. My relations were afraid of him. Heaven help me! for my betrothed disclaims me, and is determined to turn monk."

She uttered the last words with all the feeling which was really at work in her heart.

The listener's emotions were singularly puzzling to his inexperience. He felt the utmost compassion for the lovely speaker's grief for her lover, and the utmost pleasure that he had resigned her; excessively angry that she should be thus ill treated, while he found himself excessively ridiculous, and somewhat conscience-stricken, for blaming this unknown, who was pursuing the same course with himself.

"Tell me more," he asked, with some effort.

"Is it not enough?" she replied. "I am not eighteen, and am hopeless. But it is almost twilight: the thrush is beginning his vesper-hymn. I must go."

"Stay," ejaculated the youth, "stay: his voice is not so sweet as yours."

As he spoke, the bird again poured forth a gush of melody, clear, sweet, and varied, as if to shame the assertion; but Albert was right, for it is the heart which gives true music to the voice. Ludmila raised her hand for him to mark the liquid trills of the songster: though her eyes were yet wet with tears, the tormenting smile of the pet of the Imperial court curled her lip; and with this implied rebuke, she walked

away. Her betrothed gazed after her with all the perplexity she could desire. The lightness and vigor of her step, the delicacy of her skin, the superb carriage of her head and neck, which for grace and pride he could only compare to that of his favorite horse, all impressed him, as they had impressed Father Cyrillus, with the thought that this could be no ordinary peasant. Then a sickening shudder passed over him, and with steps as heavy as his heart, he moved away, believing fully that he was in the power of some being of unearthly power.

The Dominican was that evening called to a distant hut, and his pupil, resolved to learn whether the sounds and sights which had haunted him, were equally obvious to the senses of another, desired Zdenko to remain with him through the night. The serf slept soundly, while his master pored over a manuscript on the Art of War, determined to await what might chance, with head as clear and heart as firm as might be. Before midnight the inexplicable summons rang, loud, yet sweet, through the cavern. Albert sprang to his follower, and half lifted him from the floor in his desperate eagerness to awake him. Zdenko staggered to his feet but half conscious. But to see that Albert wanted him was enough, and he stood fully collected, when the fairy-bell again uttered its thrilling voice. The young baron's eyes were fixed on those of his vassal with an inquiring look, which received no answer.

"Did you not hear it?" he then asked.

"Hear what?" replied Zdenko.

"The dog has heard it," murmured the young man, pointing to the hound, which had crawled, as before, to his master's side, where he crouched with bristling hair, and uttering a strangled growl, between fear and anger. The serf only looked on as if in dismay, yet showed no consciousness of more than passed before his eyes. Albert grasped his arm with a violence that brought a contortion of pain to his face.

"Listen!" he exclaimed. Zdenko only crossed himself, muttering, "He is mad."

"The brute, then, is mad: he hears strange sounds also."

"Yes, dogs and horses see and hear things we know nothing of; and you, master, do you forget you are a Sunday child?"

The youth's only reply was a look almost frenzied. He rushed from the cave; the hound bounded after him; and Zdenko, now really alarmed, followed, with difficulty keeping pace with the rapid movements of his excited master.

"You cannot hear! Can you see?" exclaimed the young baron, fiercely, as they ascended the cliff he sought.

"I cannot see all that you can," replied the serf; "for I am not a Sunday child."

"There! there!"

Zdenko stared in his master's face, as if the moonlight displayed nothing else; yet on the verge of the precipice, in full relief against the clear blue sky, like the descended spirit of a star, hovered the airy form the youth expected. He sprang forward to throw himself at her feet; but the serf arrested him. He struggled, but was too securely pinioned by muscles more hardened than his own.

"In the name of God, master!" ejaculated his follower. At the word, the phantom recoiled; but, as she glided apparently over the edge of the cliff, her right hand pointed to the ground whence she receded.

"Release me!" said Albert, with a look and tone no one—not even the monk—ever dared to disobey. Zdenko fell back; and as the young man advanced, his eye was caught by a gleam in the grass. He stooped and raised—could he believe his senses?—the jewelled clasp which weeks before he had placed in the hands of the Jew Ozias. Every thing combined to show that he was environed by some power he could neither comprehend nor resist.

Conscience-stricken, the young recluse groaned aloud. Had

he but resisted the first view of this female demon, had he but confessed her appearance to his ghostly adviser and received his counsel and his prayers,—but it was too late: he could not himself pray to be delivered from her thralldom: of what use, then, would be the petitions of another? He only knew, or rather felt, that he, the vowed in heart to shun all womankind, was now the lover of a female fiend, the madman, who wanted only courage to plunge with her into the fatal realms from which she doubtless came.

And thus vanished the Dominican's labor of years. Alas for those who strive to war with nature!

Albert's first thought the next morning was of the phantom, his next of the peasant-girl. They were strangely blended in his excited fancy. He took the path to the valley of the heretics soon after sunrise, armed only with his bow and wood-knife, attended only by his favorite hound. Liska, as she had told him she was called, seemed to be waiting for him almost on the same spot where he had parted from her. With her bright and penetrating eyes, her firm and rounded form, her cheek fresh and roseate with the breath of morning, she could not well have looked less like an elf or unhallowed sprite.

"Liska," said the young hunter, "you must tell me more of yourself."

She shook her head firmly, almost sternly, as she answered, "I may not: I dare not."

He drew up his tall and powerfully-developed form. "By my side you may dare any thing!" he rejoined.

"You are proud in your youth and strength; but against such fears as mine you would be powerless."

"Powerless! when the first blast of my horn would bring a hundred men to my side? When hundreds more would hasten to lay their lives at my feet the instant my will was known?"

Albert was indeed proud of the unlimited sway he held over his father's serfs and vassals.

"Say thousands, still are you powerless."

"Whence come you? What foes can you dread? Speak, Liska, speak; for there is a mystery about you which tortures me!"

"Ask whence comes the mist which veils and adorns these mountains. Ask the river that rushes by us what dangers lurk beneath its foamy course."

"You bewilder, you will destroy me! What know you—a stranger, as you say—of the mist of our wilds or of the forms which people it? What know you of our streams, or the beings which lurk below to lure us to destruction by their beauty and their melody?"

Ludmila grew pale while he spoke, for the fire was burning in his eye which was deemed a signal of the retributive justice that attended him. She grew pale; but her eye never turned from his, and her tones, though scarce raised above a whisper, lost neither mellowness nor firmness, as she replied,—

"You destroy yourself! You will destroy those of whose faith you have just boasted! Is it not enough to make the spirits of your woods and streams arise to wail over the departing power of the Rabenstein when the heir to so many brave ancestors, the born protector of so many true and loving vassals, would renounce the name he should revere, desert the charge he should cling to with pride, to sink into a monkish soldier, the victim and the tool of others' craft and others' interests?"

Her voice rose as she spoke, until its clear and vibrating intonations seemed to the excited and astonished youth like an echo of the mysterious summons of his cave. He trembled before the beauty and power which enchained him.

"Speak on," he said, at last: "guide me as you will."

"Guide yourself. Dream away life no longer, a mere

student of the thoughts and deeds of others. Act from your own clear brain and strong heart. The world wants such."

"And leave you?"

"I shall be with you,—with you in the mist, in the breeze, in the rushing stream."

"It is you, then, who have hovered over me in slumber, who have smiled on me through the mist and under the moonlight. You, who have seemed to call, yet have always escaped me; you, for whom I would give my life; you, who demand perhaps my soul. Take it, take all that God has given me, so that I may look on you, may dream that you love me!"

"I ask nothing of you but your love; nor would I ask that, if to grant it would harm yourself."

"My love! Yes, it is love that brings me to your feet,—that makes me blind to all sights but your beauty, deaf to all music but your voice. It is the love of which poets have discoursed to me, of which Nature has whispered in my lonely hours, but which my reason knew not until I knew you. Elf or demon though you may be, I care not: I am yours!"

The mischievous smile and glance just flitted over the face of the countess, as she answered, mysteriously,—

"Elf I may be; but not demon."

"Tell me, what are you, since you accept my love?"

"Ask not, think not, unless you would lose me forever. Be satisfied that I love you."

Albert threw himself at her feet.

"Those words again!" he exclaimed, passionately. "Let me read them in your eyes, and then die while I believe them true!"

"Albert of Rabenstein, *I love you!* Be this my troth-plight!"

She placed on his finger an antique cameo of great beauty,—a *Cupid*, with folded wings, striving to extract one of his

own arrows from his breast,—leaned over his kneeling form, encircling him as lightly with her white and graceful arms as if she had been indeed thin air; a sigh, rather than a kiss, touched his lips, and then the heiress of Reisenberg withdrew herself, all pale and cold, as if an enchanter's touch had transformed her to marble. Her conquest was completed, but she must still conceal how far she herself was conquered. The young enthusiast looked imploringly upon her.

“Do not fade from me now!” he entreated. “Do not vanish from me until I can be sure that I am not dreaming, that I am not mad!”

“Fear not,” she replied. “From you I shall never again vanish; for you henceforth I am mortal. But remember, my love has its dangers; for I come of a race with whom treachery was never unavenged!”

As the youth was about to reply, they heard the bay of hounds, and the next moment a noble stag bounded around a projecting point of rock and made for the river; the hound that had lain crouched at Albert's feet was on the alert, and sprang forward. Thus intercepted, the stately quarry lowered his branching antlers and stood at bay, and, ere the young man could fit an arrow to his bow, rushed on him with desperate ferocity; and before the dogs could effect a diversion, had planted his forefeet with all his sinewy might upon the young man's chest. As he rose to repeat the blow, an arrow sank deep into his panting side; he rolled over in death, as Zdenko sprang forward in frantic haste. It was time. Albert was insensible, or nearly so, and the blood was gushing from his mouth. Without uttering a sound, Ludmila knelt and raised her lover's head upon her lap and arms, while Zdenko dipped water in his peasant's hat, which he dashed over his face and throat.

“Do not tremble,” he said to the young girl; “I have seen worse hurts than this get well: the good dogs broke his

aim. Accursed be they, though, that they started him! But do not fear: he will be well to-morrow. Sit quietly while I run for help to lift him." He hurried off at full speed.

"Well to-morrow!" thought the poor girl, while the tears began to stream over her cheeks: she had seen such sights before. The minutes of Zdenko's absence seemed hours to her fears; but he shortly returned with several peasants, and the young baron was borne to the nearest hut, which was, luckily, that of Franz.

"If Father Cyrillus were but here!" was the first thought of all; and Father Cyrillus was summoned. He came, and with him another, from whom his son's danger could not be hidden,—the stern old Lord of Rabenstein. All but the monk gave way before him as if a pestilence had appeared. Ludmila, however, stood by, resolute to look well on the father of her betrothed. How different, she thought, was his look from the frank and cheerful, if somewhat choleric, face of her father! He had been a wicked man, she felt sure. But she forgot it when she heard his stifled groan, and the tone in which, after some minutes of painful silence, he asked, "Will he live?"

He loved his son! What right, then, had this hard monk to sow dissension between them? She would continue her plots, if but to punish him.

All day Zdenko sat at the door of the hut, as watchful as the hound that lay at his feet. As a faint moan now and then was heard from within, the poor serf groaned, and hot tears fell over his bronzed cheeks. He was accusing himself as the cause of the disaster.

At night, a violent fever came on the sufferer; and then, in the unconsciousness of delirium, he poured forth, to his tutor's amazement, all his adventures and emotions of the last few days. He raved of strange shapes, of visions floating *on the mountain-mist*. He talked of love and beauty, and ad-

dressed "Liska" in words of fervor and devotion that struck the monk aghast, for they had evidently their origin in experience. His brain swam between anger and dismay. Who could thus have overthrown the fabric he had been years in raising? He could think of no one but the peasant-girl who had sought him on the previous day; and yet the few hours she had been in that region—but Albert himself was a mystery.

Ludmila too was in no less perturbation. She heard the agitated tones of Albert's voice, but soon after midnight even those occasional sounds died away, and utter silence succeeded. Perhaps it was the silence of death. Her heart beat so forcibly that she pressed her hands strongly over it, as if its throbs must be audible. She tried to listen; but the true pulses, beating time to the struggles of love and fear, sounded like the roar of a cataract in her ears. Snatching up a large mantle, she hurried forth into the open air. Before his master's door Zdenko lay stretched in deep slumber, and by his side was Albert's hound. The animal started, and uttered a slight growl: she laid her hand fearlessly on his head, with a low word of kindness: he recognised the voice and touch, and dropped his head again between his paws.

"Thank God!" she murmured, "he is better, or Zdenko would not be sleeping thus. Now I will give this hard monk something more to think about."

Withdrawing a little, she raised a silver call to her lips, and uttered a soft but prolonged note. As she desired, the sound reached the ears of the watcher within. Father Cyrillus opened the door, and beheld a figure shrouded in drapery, the pale outline of a face with long, heavy tresses drooping around it, and heard a voice, which in the silence sounded preternatural, call "Eblis." A powerful black horse bounded up the side of the knoll on which the hut stood, as if he had arisen from the bowels of the earth, appearing in the

moonlight like a gigantic phantom. Sinking on his haunches, and raising his forehead high, he seemed to perform obeisance to his summoner; then, at a sign, he dropped on his knees, the dark figure seated herself on his back, and with the rush of an arrow they were gone. The monk stood rooted to the spot. This unknown, then, who had really touched his own feelings, to whom he had offered his protection, was doubtless a sorceress: she it doubtless was who had produced the frenzies in Albert's brain which had so surprised him. This solution, so natural in those days, was far less annoying to the thinker than to suppose his pupil the victim of a natural human affection. The devil was supposed to influence many things by a positive, sensible interference; but it was also supposed that he could be thwarted. Father Cyrillus feared the devil less than he feared to have his plans crossed, and he knew too well how abiding a true love could be; but a sorcery—it was fearful, but not unconquerable.

"We live in troubled times," he thought, "when the struggle is fierce between ignorance and tyranny and the young power of truth and freedom, and the spirit of evil is watchful and active lest he lose his dominion amid the corruptions he has created. But what do his emissaries here, so far from the ambition and contention of the world?"

He returned to his still slumbering patient and prayed. At daybreak Berthold had arrived, and shortly after sunrise the young Franconian presented herself before the monk, as he walked forth to refresh himself in the morning air. She wore her peasant-costume; her rich tresses were simply braided; her cheek was a shade less rosy than when he had first seen her, but she looked altogether human and innocent, as, with a low reverence, she modestly asked after the health of the young baron, and explained that she was in the glen when the stag had rushed upon him.

The more the Dominican looked and listened, the more

he became convinced that Albert might be carried back to the Rabenstein on a litter that very day.

"What is your name?" he asked, abruptly.

"Liska."

He wondered that the girl could lift up so firm and unconscious a glance to his own, and almost deluded himself into the belief that he could detect a sort of fiendish mirth behind it.

"Liska," he said, "what if I were to tell you that I have learned your story to be false?"

She colored; but her eye never wavered, and she answered, with a slight smile,—

"You cannot tell what is not true, reverend sir."

The querist felt that the simple answer put his subterfuge to rout. "At least," he continued, "I distrust you,—distrust your motives."

"Father, is there any thing in your own heart that leads you to suspect others?"

"Are you a true daughter of the Church, and presume thus to answer your spiritual guide?" was the frowning rejoinder.

"I am the true daughter of a power that teaches more freedom than the Church grants; and it is said of you, father, that you permit more to your flock. Can you blame me, then, if I would defend myself by it?"

"Child,—if child you are,—you are wandering from the purpose. I cannot give time and thought to you now; but hereafter you must speak more fully. I must know more of this tale of oppression you have told; I must know the truth; and remember, I have power both spiritual and secular to enforce it from you."

"I shall be ready; ready to name the priest whose tyranny has compelled me hither, and the novice on whose love and

sense of duty he has so unduly wrought; ready to meet whatever your conscience dare impose."

She spoke with modesty and simplicity, yet the monk winced under her words; for, with all his self-delusion that he was acting for his pupil's ultimate happiness, conscience started at this strange girl's speech, to warn him that he was but carrying out a scheme of private vengeance, by undue control over an innocent life.

"And you do not fear me?"

"Why should I fear you, if you are good and just?"

There was a short pause. "Go," Father Cyrillus said, at last, "and observe that you are not to leave this place until you hear from me."

Ludmila bowed deferentially, and withdrew. She found Berethold awaiting her.

"You have really frightened Father Cyrillus," he said, "as well as crossed his purposes: fire and fagot may yet be your portion."

"You must consume by my side, good Berethold."

"Without knowing what to think, he has yet a mysterious dread of you, as I can discover, although he does not condescend to make me his confidant; and he will have my lord Albert carried back to Rabenstein to-day."

"Will he endanger his life thus?"

"No, no: he loves him too well: he is satisfied of his safety. But see here: what is to be done now with this, which I found on the spot of yesterday's affray? It must have fallen from Albert's doublet;" and he produced the clasp which Ludmila had restored to her lover on the cliff.

"I will give it to the monk this time," she replied, "to show him how far he is from getting the money he hoped for it, and despite your threat of the fagots."

Father Cyrillus had his charge removed to his home amid the rocks, and wearied with the previous night's vigils,

intrusted Albert to the serf's care, and resigned himself to slumber. At the hour when the moon's rays streamed directly into the cavern, a sound reached his ear which mingled with his dreams like the music of flutes. He awoke to hear the harmony continued, and to behold just over his patient's head, as Diana stooped over Endymion, a radiant figure, in garments of spotless white, with wavy tresses falling all around her from beneath a circlet of glittering gems that bound the brow. Startled as he was, his vivid imagination and keen sense of beauty luxuriated for a moment in the picture he beheld: before he could stir, it had vanished. He sprang up, touched Zdenko, who sat with his face towards the point in question, and asked softly if he had seen the apparition. The serf gave a blank look at the speaker, and replied by asking, "Are you walking in your sleep, father?" He bent over his patient, who slept soundly; but as he turned away, something near his feet threw up a starry gleam beneath the moon's rays, and, stooping, he raised, to his surprise and dismay, the jewel he had placed in the hands of the Jew Ozias. There could be no natural solution of such a mischance; but the monk was as fruitful in resources as he was resolute, and in five minutes' time he had decided on his course of action.

The great object of Conrad's life, since he had known Albert's existence, was through him, to crush Zahera. Loving the youth with the whole strength of his fiery and impulsive nature, he believed sincerely that to keep him from woman's love was to keep him from the most fatal and fearful evil of life, the danger of its disappointment. But even his affection for the son could not have shaken his resolve for vengeance on the parent.

He dismissed the serf to rest, seated himself by the taper, wrote a few lines, and then read until the saffron clouds of morning began to replace the gray vapors that succeeded the

night: when, ~~arriving~~ his attendant, he left the cave and bent his course towards the lodge in the meadow. Here he gave the man he had penned to the first serf he met, merely saying: — For Sir Adolf of Weinsberg.”

Sir Adolf of Weinsberg, though a knight of the Empire, was a vassal of the Baron of Rabenstein, and would have been a troublesome one, if Zahra had permitted himself to be troubled; but immured in his fortress, like an old lion which sinks to the bottom of his den to die, he was content so long as his dues were paid: as for services, he required few save of the peasants. But half a Catholic, Sir Adolf found an occasional excuse for robbing a monastery, as he did a merchant: but half a heretic, he levied contributions on the Vandal settlements about him, which would have utterly ruined Bohemians, but which the arts and industry inherited from their ancestors enabled these pious and patient disciples of a pure faith to endure. Brave and skilful, he had led a wandering and predatory life: acknowledging no superior but the Emperor, his sword had been generally employed by him, until, during the late troubles with the citizens, some new disgust with Eberhard of Wurtemberg, whom he hated, had driven him from the Imperial standard to his home in the Bohemian confines.

The place of meeting appointed by the monk was a dreary and unfrequented dell, half-way between Rabenstein and the fortress of his proselyte. Cliffs which only the eagle could surmount frowned over it on one hand, and on the other the Eger dashed by with loud complaints against the frequent rocks that strove to impede its course. Here, two hours after nightfall, sat the stout knight, like an iron statue, on horse-back, as Father Cyrillus approached him, not mounted, according to the custom of ecclesiastics, when haste or distance made riding necessary, on a meek palfrey or sober mule, but reining with skill and vigor a native steed, fiery and strong.

"But for those womanish garments about you, father," Sir Adolf began, "I should read you for a bold knight and true lover hastening to break a lance in honor of the lady of his allegiance."

"Do I remind you of any such?"

"Yes. Many a time have I thought of one since I have known you: Conrad was his name. What a rider! what a judge of a horse! A quick eye and fine ear he had; and the boldest devil! His comrades used to swear he had some sort of surety for his life from the evil one; but I told them it was his hawk's eye, quick wit, and supple limbs that carried him harmless. Where a dozen sodden knaves would be rode down, with nothing but courage to abide by, he would dart off like a fish, and leave his mark wherever he aimed a blow. By the three kings, but I wish I had him now!"

"What countryman was he?"

"A Bohemian. But this seems to you an old man's prate, father. Ah, you cannot know how a true knight's heart warms to those who have rode under his banner, struck for his cause, shared the same dangers and the same victories!"

"Yes, the leader's heart warms to the followers so long as they can ride and fight and, if need be, starve. But let them once complain of being as mortal as himself, let them faint and falter: then the temper is apt to warm; then come the curse and the blow; and he who has been proud of being the instrument of another's glory or greed may find how valued is the born thrall by the born master. And then come hate and treachery and revenge: else why sit you here, Sir Adolf, mailed as if for the battle-field, while my serge robe keeps out the strongest and most subtle of man's foes,—fear?"

"You cut wide and deep, father. Yet, though there is truth in your words, for myself I may say that I have dealt

as fairly as might be with my own knaves. If they rode hard, so did I; if they were hungry, so was I; if there was wine, wassail, and red gold got in exchange for hard knocks, they had their share; and if I live, while many a stout rider has bit the dust around me, it is not because I shunned the dangers into which I led them."

"You bear with my indiscretion better than I deserve; but I know what you say to be true. I was thinking of the world as it goes. This Conrad,—this Bohemian, whom you remember with pleasure,—let me hear more of him." And the monk closed his eyes, like one striving to relapse into a dream from which he had been unwillingly aroused.

"He was last with me at Scharndorf, when the Emperor defeated Eberhard the Riotous. Then he saved my life from the count himself, who had me at vantage owing to a blow some dastard had given my horse. Conrad made in, and gave him as fair a blow as ever belted knight aimed, unhorsed him, and, in the same breath, sprang to the ground that I might mount his horse. But Eberhard marked him; and, after the hypocritical submission for which the Emperor restored him to his privileges and power, he strove to bribe him to enter his own service. That failing, he tried to injure and insult me by sneers that I did not, knightlike, stand my own ground, but must call on my men to protect me. My spurs were not won in a tourney with blunted spears, luckily, and Conrad told loudly the plight my steed was in. It cost him dear; for the ruffian, encountering him one day, pretended that he did not make way with due promptness and respect, and gave him a blow over the head with his lance that first nearly cost him his life and then his senses. However, he recovered, and almost immediately disappeared. I would have fought Eberhard upon it, but the Emperor interfered: so I could only shrug my shoulders

and wait. But of my trusty soldier never heard I more." His voice expressed a sincere regret as he concluded.

"You will find the Count of Wurtemberg ere long," said Father Cyrillus, after a pause.

"I've more than one score to settle with him. Some four years ago, a party of Jews of Esslingen wanted to travel under my protection to Nuremberg."

At the name of Esslingen, Father Cyrillus listened with a new expression.

Sir Adolf here related what has been seen of the flight of Elizabeth and her daughter under the care of Ozias, the consequent skirmish, and the Jew's wound.

"The younger of the women, unused to such sights, went into fits. In the confusion, while they were striving to care for her and for the man, I rode up. The girl's veil was off. Marvellous fair she was; and, Jewess or no Jewess, some six months afterwards I saw the same face by the side of her Majesty the Empress."

Had the knight chosen his themes with the express intent of setting in motion his hearer's most agitating memories, he could not have succeeded better; but he gave no outward sign, save the unconscious tightening of the reins he held, as if the iron that pressed the bars of his horse could restrain his own soul. The brute reared and pawed the air under the unusual severity. The action recalled the rider to himself. He relaxed his grasp with a deep sigh.

"I have tired you with my gossip of the past, father, when your thoughts are filled with the present, and have not given you a chance to say what you wanted with me. However, I've some good news to tell you first. Count Otto of Riesen-berg, a rich and powerful noble, a good soldier and stanch friend of the Emperor, is a prisoner at Ulm. His Majesty refuses to ransom him on the terms proposed by the citizens. It is suspected that there is some craft at work against him.

His men are discontented; so are his friends; and altogether, from what I learn, it would seem that one man, unless he be a prince or bishop, has seldom created so much dissension."

"That is good news!" It was so to him in more than one sense; for while Count Otto was immured in Ulm there was no danger from the marriage-contract between his daughter and the heir of Rabenstein.

"I thought it would content you. And now, what news have you for me?"

"Do you believe in any thing save your own word, sir knight?" asked the monk, abruptly.

"Were you other than a Churchman, I should tell you that I believed in the strength of my arm and the temper of my sword," returned the German, with some heat.

"Blessed sanctity of the Church," replied Father Cyrillus, "which protects men in insult and tyranny! But I claim no such immunities. In the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free I talk with all of human kind, and what I ask you, I would ask Charles IV. or Gregory XI. had I occasion."

"Well, then, I answer that the man who believes in his own word believes in enough to keep the world in honor and honesty; for he necessarily believes in a power to call him to account for falsifying it."

"The very wolves will rend a wolf they suspect of treachery."

"Layman and fighting-man as I am, I know that whoever respects his word respects himself, and must therefore be respected by others."

"A most logical conclusion, in which I heartily concur, whilst I can bear witness, too, that no knight better practises it than yourself. But, to make my question plainer, look at this." He held up the clasp received so unaccountably. "You know the disposition Albert made of this?" he continued.

"Surely!" returned Sir Adolf, with amazement. "I supposed it was in the hands of some rich senator of Nuremberg by this time."

"It was restored to me just after the last midnight." He described the occurrence, described the appearance of the shrouded figure on the black horse which had so startled him, and then recounted the adventure of the Franconian peasant-girl, Liska, to whom he referred these strange events. The knight crossed himself repeatedly, and, looking uneasily around, said, as the monk concluded, "See here, father, I should rather have heard this in the daylight and in some other place. It sounds very like witchcraft at the least."

"Holy Writ warrants us in the belief that the powers of darkness are permitted to tempt and test mankind thus. Albert, as you know, has chosen the Church for his portion, the cause of freedom for his labor. Do you not see how the Evil One may hope to lop off so goodly a branch from the young plant of liberty, by winding such snares around the heir of Rabenstein, weakening his resolves and perverting his sense of right and wrong?"

"Truly, for the lad is but young and inexperienced, and, if report is true, sometimes a little strange, eh?" And he touched his forehead significantly.

Father Cyrillus shivered at the last words; but the pale, uncertain light of the hour did not betray him.

"But, if this matter be of the devil, father, you have bell, book, and candle on your side," Sir Adolf continued.

"I have learned that such things avail little when the enemy has entered the fortress,—when the heart is willingly surrendered. In short, Sir Adolf, you must rid me of this sorceress."

"Whew!" ejaculated the knight. "She may take wings and fly away."

"We shall soon test that."

"She may bewitch me; for I am none too good a Christian."

"But you have set bright eyes and sweet voices at defiance in your life."

"Um! I can't say I've had many opportunities of late years," replied Sir Adolf, dryly.

"Pshaw! you must serve me at any rate."

"With all my heart: but how?"

"Send three or four of your men-at-arms to carry her off. You can keep her close in your own stronghold until we are out of the way; and, the spell once broken, new scenes and occupations, new ideas, will restore Albert to his senses."

"But those heretics with whom you have placed her are not so afraid of the devil as some of the rest of us,—whether because they are more or less familiar with him I can't say; and, if I undertake to spirit off a she-devil from their midst, they may make an uproar that will reach Zahera's ears; and it has been for many a year hard to tell which side of a fray he'll espouse."

"It would scarce become him—" The monk uttered these words with a savage emphasis, and then abruptly paused. His companion took up the broken phrase.

"True. It would ill become him to interfere with my fancy for a pretty villager; but he's rather capricious, and we can't always do these things quietly. Now, I don't pretend to so long a head as yours, father, but mine has probably been driven into more expedients. Listen to me, therefore. You have failed in getting good coins of the realm for this jewel: it is not likely the devil will try to get it from your person, since he has been so civil as to return it,—a part of the story which, I suppose, puzzles you as much as me. It is easier to get good arms and armor than good men: those to whom you go will gladly enough furnish you. For the journey, I can aid you somewhat; and, as you will make it with me, there'll *be the less* need. You want to get the young baron off with-

out trouble; or, indeed, you won't get him off at all. Our plans are not suspected. I will go to Rabenstein. I have business with the baron; as a neighbor and acquaintance, I may well visit him. He will be glad to trust the lad with me for a few days, only to get him out of your clutches, from what I understand, and the thing is done."

"Good! But it will be some days before Albert can move about. He was terribly bruised, as I wrote you."

"Well, I can waste a day or two. To-morrow I will be at Rabenstein."

"Good-night, then; for we have both far to ride."

The monk galloped off as if to a charge on the battle-field; the knight trotted away like one who has found it as well to move slowly and steadily through the world.

Sir Adolf of Weinsperg, as we have long since seen, held fast to one of the requisitions of knighthood,—to speak the truth. He would keep his word, though to his own hurt; and although he believed vastly more in the devil than in the saints, and, relying fully on Father Cyrillus's authority that the said potentate was particularly busied with Albert of Rabenstein, felt something of disinclination to meddle in his affairs, yet he had promised. So, at high noon on the day following his interview with the monk, the sentinel on the battlements beheld with open-mouthed amazement a plump of spears winding through the rocky defile on the west. The baron was just in that delectable state of mind or temper which gives a man a perfect longing for a quarrel; but Berethold, great in heraldic lore, deciphered the pennon of the stranger before his horn had summoned attention; and his lord's good humor was not increased by discovering that he was doomed to the punctilios of a friendly visit. Could he have suspected even half the right he had to raise drawbridge, lower portecullis, and ply cross bow against the new-comer, or to meet him, lance in hand, in a pitched field,

he would have felt a grim joy,—the first emotion of the kind which had stirred his gaunt frame for many a year, save that he had felt in securing his son's marriage with the daughter of his friend, Otto of Riesenbergh. But this pleasure was not his; for Sir Adolf still passed for a faithful servant of the Empire, and, as such, must be welcomed.

The stout knight gazed around with the same surprise Count Otto had evinced on his admission within the court. He too remembered Zahera as the proud knight, the active soldier, the rigorous and systematic master. But small signs of these qualities were now visible. Inaction and disorder reigned supreme. One over-fed hound saluted the intruders with a lazy growl, for which he was rewarded by a kick from the huntsman, who seemed thankful for even so slight a chance of exercising his dormant energy. A hawk, sad and sullen on its perch, turned up a half-shut eye slowly, its native keenness and brilliancy subdued by sloth and gorging. The guard-room contained some dozen men-at-arms, with corslets half burnished, soiled doublets, and hair and beard like the shaggy front of the buffalo.

"Twenty years ago," said the guest to himself, as he followed the seneschal up the narrow and tortuous stairway, "twenty years, and who would have foretold this of a knight active as a chamois of the Alp, fierce and watchful as a merlin, and with followers as bold and untiring as himself, or woe be to them. By the Three Kings, I wouldn't have given five seconds' purchase for the life of the wizard who had shown him such a picture as this. Well, well; I've grown old myself since those days; but this is the desolation of abomination, that old Father Simon preached about when he wanted to get us into the humor of another Crusade!" The close of his speculation brought him into the presence of the baron, to whom, though not exactly his liege-lord, Sir Adolf being a knight of the Empire, he owed certain dues and service as

the feudal tenure of lands within the demesne of Rabenstein. Zahera advanced a few steps from the seat of honor at the upper end of the apartment, in courtesy to his important vassal. The latter bent the knee slightly in acknowledgment of this relation, and, beckoning his esquire forward, offered the tribute he bore to the baron's acceptance; twenty-five gold pieces which it was his duty to furnish yearly for the pay of five knights, and a pair of hawking-gloves as a symbol of the baron's claims upon him. These ceremonies performed with stately courtesy on both sides, the good knights relapsed into the usual intercourse of equals and acquaintances, frank and easy on the part of Sir Adolf, scrupulously hospitable on that of his entertainer, who wrestled hardly with his habitual gloom and silence. The Knight of Weinsperg, however, found no lack of topics for discourse: always in the world, he was familiar not only with its great changes, its continuous efforts, its conflicting interests, but with much of the manœuvrings, the secret springs, the personal views, which moved it. At home, in court or camp, council-chamber or hunting-field, he had much that was animating and important to communicate, and Zahera was surprised at finding himself gratified, and even excited, by a thousand revelations from people among whom his name was once of consequence. During the day, he heard from Father Cyrillus's report of his pupil's state. It was favorable: Albert would be able to sit his horse in a week's time.

"Then I must keep myself for a week within the claws of the dragon," returned Sir Adolf, in reply to this information. "But how to amuse myself and him meantime?"

"You can hunt, and eat and drink: there are neighboring knights and nobles, whom the baron will invite to help you kill time; and, unsocial, morose as he is, Rabenstein is still hospitable, and lavish in the due entertainment of his guests."

"That is not disagreeable to a fighting-man, because, as you

may know, we have so often to keep more fasts than the Church requires, that we are always ready to remunerate ourselves by feasting. Well, we'll hunt, feast, drink, and then——"

"And then," continued the monk, "you can see the retainers exercise with the long-bow and arblast, see what they can do on horseback, with lance and battle-axe."

"But the serfs?"

"They can do all that I have promised for them. Ah, liberty! best gift of God, true breath of God, what power is in thy presence, in thy faintest promise, even! Warmed by that ray of liberty which I have taught them to discern, you shall see those thralls of the soil, those human cattle, in whom their masters scarce acknowledge the common heirship of immortality,—you shall see them think, act, strike, as only freemen can, when once they find themselves beyond the reach of lash and fetters!"

The knight answered this with a shrug and smile, which expressed a kindly indulgence for the over-wrought enthusiasm of the speaker. The red blood mounted to the monk's thin cheek, and the fire kindled in his brilliant eye, as he observed this.

"That retainer of whom you spoke so well last night," he rejoined.

Sir Adolf understood the implied reproof.

"True, true," he said, frankly: "I had a lesson in him which should have taught me that true manhood is above all chances of time and place,—is, as you say, the breath of God himself. Yes, my brave Conrad was a born serf of this very Rabenstein, manumitted by Zahera for having saved his life in a stag-hunt. What a fool I am, wanting to learn what became of him, and not thinking that his old lord might know something of his fate!"

They stood, during this conversation, on the northern bar-

tizan of the fortress, and discerned the nearly gigantic form of the baron ascending the hill-side below with a firm and regular stride, which his haggard cheek and hollow eye did not promise. Father Cyrillus turned from his companion and walked to and fro several times in silence, inwardly debating whether he should remain and listen to the conversation likely to ensue. Had his cowl been thrown back, an observant eye would have discovered the expression of a sad, crushed soul, wandering doubtfully between the past and present, as the souls of the unburied wandered along the banks of Styx; would next have seen a metempsychosis, as it were, a transformation from this ghastly, doubtful, powerless state to a recognition of the human and divine in himself, in which the philosopher would have understood the monk's crowning attribute, the individuality, the consciousness of self, the trust in self, or rather in God's power expressed through himself,—despite all weakness incident on temperament, habit, and superstition of the age,—that had sustained, and urged him through all perhaps that humanity could bear and live. The knight watched him as he paced the gallery, with the eye of one accustomed to measure and decide upon men.

“By all the devils,” he broke forth, “I don't know a more ridiculous mistake than your being in the Church. Why, with twenty knights like you, and the followers you would train, I'd swear to do more than any two knights of the Empire have ever yet done with the same force.”

Father Cyrillus received the unpremeditated acknowledgment with something like gratification; but he only answered,—

“Wait!”

As he spoke, a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder and a stern, though somewhat broken voice said,—

“Wait for what?”



"Wait," returned the monk, without hesitation, "until Baron Albert is of age."

The reply seemed to be sufficient to the questioner, however incomplete to an ordinary hearer.

"You call yourself poor," said Sir Adolf, carelessly, to avert an awkward pause, "poor, with such lands, and the serfs upon them; whereas you are only careless."

"Well, to be careless is to be poor; and though Rabenstein has broad lands, and strong limbs to work them, yet I scarcely venture to call the first mine, for they have been pledged for my carelessness this many a year, and, very like, will fall into the hands of the usurer before I die. I showed it all to Count Otto of Riesenberg before I permitted him to betroth his daughter to my son. Albert will have little to receive but these old walls; and so I would like every one to understand who may hope that their influence over him now may be of any use when he is of age."

The last words were spoken slowly, pointedly, and bitterly; but Father Cyrillus felt the intended affront as so futile, that it called only a slight and unseen smile to his lips: it was but the mouse fancying he could escape from the claws of the cat, he thought.

"Your lands pledged! But how then about your people?" questioned the Knight of Weinsperg, with an earnestness that would have betrayed to a suspicious ear a feeling deeper than mere curiosity.

"My people?" reiterated the baron, with a contemptuous sound, the nearest approach to a laugh which ever moved his muscles. "Oh, so far they are safe enough. My dealings were with a Jew of Esslingen. Well, this son of Abraham professed a conscience, and had the insolence to talk as if he were better than a Christian; and when I offered him men, women, and children with the land,—for what good is it without them?—he read me a homily about letting the oppressed

go free, and the Lord's servants not being sold as bondsmen, all which I had to take with the money; but devil a coin would he let me have on my serfs. Otherwise I must confess he was reasonable enough. Since then, the Emperor has seen fit to annul the debts of one of his favorites, Eberhard of Wurtemberg, with the Jews of this very city; but he may yet discover that there are others of the *Semperfreien* who, had they been as well treated, might be of as much consequence in his wars as a sovereign prince who fights for him to-day, and against him to-morrow."

"However, on the whole, you may still be pleased that your thralls are your own, whatever may chance; for brawn and sinew are of use everywhere," returned the knight, who somewhat piqued himself on the exercise of severe reason.

"Everywhere?" repeated Zahera, with an expression which, to an inferior, he would have made contemptuous, but which, to his guest, he restrained within the bounds of polite inquiry.

"Surely: you can make their services worth more in broad pieces for the field of war than for the field of grain or grape?"

The baron turned on him a look that was barely not offensive,—a look which almost said, "Have you no more respect for your own rank than to speak of a serf's using bow and spear?" The Knight of Weinsperg acknowledged the tacit query by a short laugh.

"No, I do not acknowledge a serf my equal; but still I do not see why, under the direction of a master, he should not take as good aim at a man as at a boar or roebuck. I don't expect him to choose battle-grounds or plan sieges; but he might ply cross-bow and mangonel, or lay spear in rest under occasion, with a good captain to lead him, as well as to wrestle, pitch the quoit, or guide ox and ass and gather in the harvest."

"You may be right; but I've had other things to think of."

"To give you an example, then," replied Sir Adolf, whose pertinacity was like that of a slot-hound, and never lost scent whatever might be the turnings and windings of the chase. "There was a serf of your own soil whom you manumitted twenty years ago and placed under my banner: Conrad he was called. Now, to speak as a Christian man, there was not a belted knight in my service whom I could honestly have preferred to him in any point. He was never servile to his betters, discourteous to his equals, nor tyrannical to his inferiors. He was always brave, sensible, and unpresuming,—satisfied to charge into the thickest of a fray or to stand guard over the baggage. He saved my life once; and I should like to learn what has become of him. Has he ever returned to your following?"

During this speech, the monk had, with apparent unconsciousness, placed himself in such a position that the baron's face was fully exposed to his view. A ghastly, feeble, conscience-stricken face it was; and the transformed Conrad, who stood there unknown, unsuspected, and in such a sense unseen, as the ghost of the departed victim might have stood over the living murderer, could scarce refrain from an ejaculation of derision and triumph. There was a plain question to be answered; for it was evident that Sir Adolf had as little idea of playing on any secret springs or emotions as if he had asked after a war-horse or a suit of armor.

"I know nothing of him. I have known nothing of him since he enlisted with you," the baron therefore replied.

"By the way," the knight ran on, "you mentioned Count Otto of Riesenberg. I've told a good deal of news, but nothing of him, I believe. He followed the Emperor to the siege of Ulm, and has been for some weeks a prisoner to the citizens."

"Otto of Riesenberga prisoner to the burghers of Ulm,—the mechanic cut-throats, the sordid clowns! What have they to do to lay their clumsy hands on such a knight? And he not ransomed yet? He deserves that love at the Emperor's cost. Speak on, sir knight: what more do you know of this?"

"Very little, truly, except a rumor that the stout old count has those busied for him with his Majesty who would rather he should stay in Ulm than return safely out of it."

"Like enough; for an honest man always has enemies. A prisoner, and foul play, too? This concerns me: this must be looked to! If I had but known this when Ozias was here!" he continued.

"Ozias?" echoed Sir Adolf.

"Yes; the heir to my scrupulous debtor. He should have lent me money on pledge of my serfs, or tested shackles himself."

The Dominican's heart throbbed as it had not done for many a day. He felt as if fate itself was working for him in drawing the meshes closer around the unconscious speaker. A goodly portion of the baron's acres pledged, and to Ozias! He almost trembled for joy. Suddenly, Zahera turned to him.

"Father Cyrillus," he said, "I have troubled you more with my temporal than my spiritual affairs during your sojourn here. I suppose Baron Albert, Berethold, and yourself could give me to know how much force I could muster should the caprice seize me to take the field once more?"

"I've seen you at the head of five hundred men,—none better, or better appointed," said Sir Adolf, willing to encourage the proceeding.

"We could furnish the amount in a few hours, from knights to knife-bearers," replied the monk.

"But more than men will be wanting."

"I think every thing may be found but money. That may

be less than desirable. Yet, if your lordship will pardon me, since we speak of business, I have been told that you have jewels of rare price,—those of Baron Albert's mother,—which would be beyond the utmost need."

Zahera's eyes glared like those of a hungry tiger. For an instant, the thought was strong in him to hurl the speaker over the gallery upon the ramparts beneath. But there was nothing more strange to himself than the power of the Dominican's eye over him. Not that it was more piercing than many others he had defied, but that, when it was bent earnestly upon him, there arose a dim, haunting memory of something in the past which he could neither define nor dismiss. It was an ever-recurring agony, like the Furies to Orestes; or, rather, like the eye of Destiny, incomprehensible, yet comprehending all. The baron's ferocity, though not his anger, faded; but when he could control his voice, spoke again without allusion to the monk's suggestion.

"Order that all, of whatever rank, who owe me service in the field be warned. Make out the estimates of what I have, and what is needful, and give it to me to-morrow, if possible."

Father Cyrillus acquiesced by a gesture and withdrew.

In twenty-four hours, Sir Adolf of Weinsperg had become a very St. Michael in the eyes of the followers of Rabenstein. "Once a soldier, always a soldier," is true of all people in all ages. Within the week, knights and retainers had gathered from cliff and valley to the full number the monk had promised. From far and near came herdsmen with dues, long undemanded, of lowing cattle, of sheep and swine, until the meadows on the south were mottled with many-colored and ever-moving groups, and the air was stirred continually with the discordant voices of the four-footed multitude and of their keepers. The storehouses were filled to overflowing, and each day's consumption replenished by fresh tributes. Ill-trained

servitors rushed to and fro, half distracted by the demands which poured upon them. Falconer and huntsman bestirred themselves with the best, and praised St. Hubert for sending them something to do. Again the armorer's forge smoked, his brawny arms were bared, and the cheerful music of steel rang out as the hammer was plied. In the northern valley, horses were in training and men at exercise. Zahera meantime said but little. No one felt certain whether he intended to head his band in person, and no one dared to ask. Silent, though courteous and watchful, he moved amid every thing that was in progress until the cares and labors of the day were given over, when jest and song passed around with the wine-flagon in the hall, and the retainers were permitted a new freedom of mirth. Then the Baron of Rabenstein assigned the honors of his household to Sir Adolf, and withdrew as far as possible from scenes and sounds in which he found no harmonies.

Sir Adolf did not know if he had done well in warming into life this torpid denizen of the mountain. In doing it, he had flattered himself that Zahera would place his troop and resources entirely in the hands of his son; but this seemed doubtful.

"What do you think?" he managed to ask of the monk one night. "Is this rally to work us good or evil?"

"Better you had not caused it; but we shall know our own, whatever hap."

"Any here?"

"Doubtless; but I have not dared to make you known to each other, lest some among the young and incautious should betray themselves. If you've a mind for a long walk now, I can show those who will probably never wear either gold or silver spurs, and yet will prove themselves more than the mates of many who do."

"With all my heart."

Apparently, the banqueting-hall was deserted by all but the speakers, who did not observe, in the most remote corner of the long and dimly-lighted apartment, a brown boy curled up like a dormouse, and as if sleeping as soundly. He had appeared at the fortress during the few last days of the commotion, in the train of Berethold, clad in the showy fashion of the minstrel of the South of Europe, and said by the old Bohemian to be his pupil in the gay science. In fact, Ludmila, carried away by her love of adventure, would follow her guardian to the heights, almost in spite of himself; and, when his voice and fingers wearied, she took the harp, and poured forth the old Bohemian lays learned at her mother's knee, with a simplicity and composure that guarded her true self as effectually from observation as could the ring of Gyges. This night, between fatigue and unusual indulgence in his wine, the good Berethold had actually become so sleepy that he had slyly withdrawn to the seneschal's apartments for a quiet nap. As the revellers began to drop off one by one, the young minstrel shoved the harp one side, and, awaiting his return, was half asleep, in spite of herself, when the words of the knight aroused her attention. She paused almost breathlessly until the door closed after them, and until she heard their footsteps on the stone floor below. She then sprang up, and, taking a torch, hastened to follow them by the subterranean passage, the key of which Berethold had given her to facilitate her plans, or her escape, should it become necessary. She did not shut herself in the vault without trepidation: the earthy vapor, too, was stifling; but fortunately the locks turned without much trouble, and as, emerging on the hill-side, she saw those she sought not far in advance, she whispered gayly to herself, "Quite as good as a password," and cautiously followed across the meadow, past the cavern, and then through a tangled covert, where the two

conspirators paused beneath a towering cliff, and a voice suddenly broke the gloomy silence by asking,—

“Whither bound to night?”

“For Ulm,” was answered by the monk, who continued, “I have taught my friend Zdenko so well the necessity of discipline and caution, that I expect he will yet require a password to let me into my own cell at high noon.”

Sir Adolf laughed in his blunt manner, and answered, “That’s very well. Men take to fighting naturally: there’s little trouble about that in an army; but you must break their heads before you can teach them order.”

“Zdenko will tell you, on the contrary, that it was a broken head which taught him disorder,” rejoined Father Cyrillus, dryly. Here the bark of a wolf broke upon the air. The wild spy’s blood ran cold; then, in a breath, she smiled at her folly. It was but a signal, and was answered by the appearance of dark forms gliding like spectres towards the sound. Suddenly the flash of a torch relieved the uncertain light which the few rays of the moon that penetrated the branches threw over the scene. The Dominican and his companion seemed to disappear in the hill-side, and Zdenko, as master of the forces, threw the glare of his torch full on the faces of the assembly, and passed them on one by one, vanishing himself last. With some little tremor, the young countess crept from her covert and stole cautiously towards the same spot, where, guided by a faint ray of light, she saw that a thin growth of underbrush screened the aperture she sought. Dropping on her knees, she cautiously parted the twigs; as she did so, she found that Zdenko was lighting up the space within, until it glowed like an imperial hall with the vivid glare of the resinous torches. It was a cavern some three hundred feet in depth and a hundred in width, as free from encumbrance or irregularities as if it had been purposely designed for its present use. The knight counted aloud

as they drew up in array at the monk's word, two hundred serfs, young, vigorous, each with his bow in hand and sheaf of arrows at his back. The young, kind, generous mistress of hundreds of such of her fellow-beings had never heretofore given them a thought much higher than, and none so tender as she bestowed on her four-footed pets. She found for the first time a true human sympathy swelling in her breast as she gazed on thralls, she knew not why. It was because there was the fire in their eyes and the firmness in their carriage of men who have learned to hope; to whom the future is not what the past has been; who by the torch of freedom, faintly and cautiously as its rays had been shed on them, dared to strain their mental sight forward into a vista where they might draw the bow with such aspirations as their masters couched the spear.

Zdenko fitted up a mark towards the end of the cavern.

"They cannot show you here what range they can take," said the monk; "but every man can exceed the usual distance, and some of them double it. You will see what marksmen they are, and how dexterously many of them can shoot five arrows in two minutes, and a few six."

Ludmila was quite as good a judge of such matters as the speaker or the knight; and she watched with equal interest the precision and rapidity with which the men performed the evolutions practised by archers in the field, at the monk's word of command. As certain ones, whom he called, showed the swiftness with which they could bend the bow and fit the arrow, and the certainty with which they hit the white, she could scarce forbear exclaiming "Well flown!" as she had so often done at home.

"They can use a boar-spear as justly," said the Dominican: "so why not a lance?"

The listener without was not so far absorbed as to forget that she might be surprised on either side. She now strained

her eyes across the glade, and in time; for some one was approaching, though slowly. Not daring to rise up, she crawled along the edge of the shrubbery until she found a gap into which she could drag herself while this new-comer passed. He also entered the cave, and she resumed her post. The first glance showed her Albert of Rabenstein added to the group. Agitated and anxious, she could not control herself enough to hear and see distinctly. The monk seemed to remonstrate with his pupil, and the knight to laugh at his fears; and when the mist passed from her eyes and understanding, she heard Albert say, respectfully, but earnestly, "It will be scarce worth while, father, for me to attempt to lead men who see that I also am led."

"My own thoughts to a letter!" said Sir Adolf, looking admiringly on the young speaker; "but I wouldn't advise you to take horse so soon. I think you must wait a week longer. But we'll talk about it to-morrow: I can tell better by daylight. You'll want strength for the work before you, believe me. There are some stanch fighters in the Imperial ranks—some old comrades of my own—that I'd as lief not meet hand to hand. There's Count Otto of Riesen-berg, the father of your betrothed: how would you get on with measuring lances with him, eh? But, as you'll none of his daughter, Father Cyrillus says, I don't see but you may as well meet him as another."

Poor Ludmila's heart swelled high with shame and anger as she heard this.

"Baron Albert has decided to take no bride but the Church," responded the monk, with some coldness.

"Rather too elderly a matron for such a groom, and too fond of keeping the reins in her own hand," laughed Sir Adolf. "Better decide on Ludmila of Riesen-berg,—just such a tormenting sprite as I can see you need to keep you

from walking in your sleep. Well for you I'm an old man, or I should have carried her off a year ago."

The unsuspected subject of these jocular remarks writhed with vexation.

"I wish you had done so," answered the monk: "you would have saved him serious annoyance."

"You could not have a better time to shake it off, then," rejoined Sir Adolf; "for the stout Count Otto is plainly no longer in favor with the Emperor, or he would not have remained a prisoner at Ulm."

At these words Ludmila sank prone upon the earth, pressing her hands tightly on her face to smother the groan that rose to her lips. Her father a prisoner! and she away from the Empress's side, where she might have effected his release!

"If Count Otto is a prisoner," said Albert, "I hope when I reach Ulm I may be of service to him."

"He's not the man to receive a kindness from an enemy; and such he will account you if you insult him by breaking your father's engagement with his daughter. But all this is your affair, young man, and you must learn, like the rest of us, by your own folly. I am surprised at your serfs here——"

"They are men like ourselves," interrupted the young baron, with a look and tone that made his betrothed love him more than ever. "I am sorry we cannot venture to muster them, so that you may know all they can do. Once within the walls of a free city, they will be free men; and I mean them to be on the way in three days."

"But, my son——" commenced the monk, with surprise.

"I have decided, father," rejoined Albert.

Sir Adolf looked from one to the other. He had conceived the younger Rabenstein to have no thought or power of his own. Father Cyrillus was amazed and disconcerted. Ah, the selfish, the shallow, and the vicious may speak lightly of love; but, even when misplaced, who can compute the myste-

rious and wondrous strength it gives a true heart? Even ambition is weak and torpid by its side. The listener without smiled proudly.

"Best dismiss your men before we hold counsel," said the knight, promptly.

On these words, Ludmila retreated; the serfs passed out and only the three conspirators remained.

"This is not a war for the freedom of one city, of one league, or one nation," said the monk, zealously, "but for the freedom of the world,—the freedom of head as well as hand. Its success is to enable men to read as they will, and worship as they will, by the light of truth only; to banish ignorance and fear and slavery, and to spread among all men the beauty, power, and happiness of learning, which a few now claim and bar from the many. Oh, if my might but equalled my will, how would I sound the trumpet of deliverance!"

"You sounded it to some purpose when you made it reach me," said Sir Adolf. "I can muster a following of a hundred in twenty-four hours; and let me once shake my banner within sight of the Imperial camp, and it will miss two hundred free lances by the next day. Two hundred serfs you have shown me: you can count, you say, on one hundred of the crowd at the castle: why, we shall have an army of our own!"

"But an army that will need providing for on its route."

"Oh, content you. I and my men are used to taking care of ourselves."

"I speak rather of Albert: he does not understand these things by practice, and talks of moving in three days, as if he had only to show himself to receive tribute from a conquered country."

"I feel that our resources will be sufficient, with the help of this good knight, until we reach Ulm."

Father Cyrillus shrugged his shoulders slightly : he wished and still expected every thing to be done in his own way.

"The cities want only men," Albert replied to this gesture : "they have every thing else. At midnight on the third day hence, Sir Adolf, I shall await you in the pass where Father Cyrillus and yourself met, with my serfs. For the rest, they must take such chance as they can to join us."

"But will not your father place you in command of the force he sends to the Emperor?"

"Quite as unlikely to do so as you would have been an hour hence," answered Albert, with a meaning smile.

"I own you've disappointed me, and I am afraid that the baron will disappoint me more; for I counted on his staying at home, so that we could transfer his troop to our own service."

"It might be done; but I should let them choose."

"Ah, well, you'll learn to use what power you have, after you've been a month in the field."

"Let us return," said Father Cyrillus. "Albert will be ill enough to-morrow from his imprudence, to postpone his expedition."

Again Ludmila retired; and, even after they had gone far enough for her to follow them with prudence, she lingered, dismayed and stupefied. To-be-sure, she had known Albert's intentions, but had placed them all to the score of the monk's persuasions. Since she was satisfied of his love for her, she had thought that to break Father Cyrillus's power in that point was to break it in all. She daily expected, too, the order of the vicar-general to remove the monk. Albert would remain, held by the influence she had established over him: he would abjure the free cities with the Hospitallers, and remain a loyal knight. Now all this web of her fancy had vanished like gossamer, and in its stead stood the grim figures of six hundred men armed against the Emperor, with Al-

bert at the head of half of them, and her father a prisoner. She reached Martha's hut she scarce knew how, and sank to sleep asking herself how she should use all she had that night discovered.

As usual after strong anxiety and excitement, Ludmila's awakening the next morning began with a painful and discouraging sense of something wrong in the past, something to be encountered in the future, to which she was neither physically nor mentally equal; and the discouragement was scarcely lessened when she became fully conscious, and returned to the question over which she had fallen asleep: what should she do? What could she do, indeed, without doing some mischief to Albert of which she could foresee neither the beginning nor end? She thought over and over again not so much the few words he uttered, as the feeling which marked every syllable. He had seemed, to her vivid and loving imagination, like some glorious statue of old Greece, warmed into a life of power and beauty by the breath of a favoring deity. A sweet, yet bashful consciousness that she had no small part in this awakening thrilled through her heart. Come what might, she would not, could not, throw the obstacle of a father in his path; and for her father, his personal interests would be better assured by Albert's presence. As for the Empire and Emperor, though the slightest disaffection to either had once seemed so unworthy a good knight, all her debates now but served to prove that a true woman's first loyalty is to her love.

On her return to the heights, she found the bustle of preparation for the day's review already begun: in the meadow horses neighed and pranced, grooms sang and swore; while in the court of the castle, knights, esquires, men-at-arms, varlets and servitors of every degree, swarmed like bees in May. In the midst of all moved Zahera, with an energy that stifled any hopes Sir Adolf still entertained of the baron's sending

forth his men under other guidance than his own. Now and then the Knight of Weinsperg cast a glance towards the northern gate, where he expected Albert's entrance, little dreaming that the swarthy minstrel who lounged listlessly against the postern was so deep a sharer in his own anxieties. Albert came at last, and the young girl trembled as he entered, but, dexterously doffing her cap as he passed, she managed thus to conceal her features. The heir of Rabenstein was cased in complete armor; and as he moved on with the same ease as in his hunting-suit, and paused with a low salutation before his father, Ludmila observed a resemblance between the two, not in feature, but in the powerful frame and magnificent proportions, in step, air, and in a certain expression which made Sir Adolf mutter to himself,—

“The old dragon and the young! There'll be no child's play when they come to an understanding.”

But hardly had the formalities of presenting the young baron to the knights with whom he was unacquainted ended, when certain new-comers presented themselves, in the person of a messenger and escort from the reverend the Vicar-General of the order of St. Dominic to Father Cyrillus. Staggered by so unexpected an event, the monk yet received the official with composure and welcome, accepted his missive with an air of humble deference, and, after perusing it, announced to the baron that he was required by it to present himself at Nuremberg, while its bearer would assume his spiritual duties at Rabenstein. At this news Sir Adolf swore a deep oath under his mustache; other knights who were engaged for the cause of the cities colored with apprehension and anger; and the baron ill concealed his content under a few courteous words. Albert walked up to his tutor, and, taking his hands, gazed into his face with a look that asked,—

“Is there no help for this?”

The Dominican shook his head slightly. "I have sufficiently explained to you the duty of obedience," he said.

"You will at least have the pleasure of escorting your friend and teacher, Sir Albert," said the baron: "his orders do not surely require so much haste that he cannot delay until we depart?"

"I have sent for you to-day," continued his father, "to present you to my friends and vassals on the occasion of your entering upon the duties of your position as my son and heir. The Emperor is at war: it is our duty as faithful servants to place ourselves at his disposal. Count Otto of Riesen-berg, my best friend, is a prisoner: it is equally our duty to hasten to his aid. It is also time to present ourselves in readiness to fulfil the contract of marriage decided by the count and myself for the heiress of Riesen-berg and yourself."

During this address Albert became ghastly pale. Ludmila trembled; and all those present who knew any thing of the state of things were agitated. At last the young man spoke, slowly and with effort; for his lips were rigid, and almost as wan as his face.

"My lord," he replied, "I can neither deceive you, nor permit you to deceive yourself; and, while I regret to disappoint you, I repeat—what I hoped you had sufficiently understood ere this—that my honor will not permit me to follow the Emperor's banner, nor yet to wed with the heiress of Riesen-berg."

A moment's death-like silence succeeded this announcement. "Honor!" then repeated Zahera, in a hollow and broken tone: "a youth's honor is in obedience to his parent."

"Your pardon, noble sir," here interposed the successor of Father Cyrillus, to whom the latter had managed to impart a hint, "your pardon, but there is an obedience higher than to earthly parents; and I have understood that

it was the young man's resolve to devote himself to the Church."

The baron's eyes flashed fire. "Such was the resolve of the pious father to whose teaching I intrusted him, and who has fulfilled the duties of his calling by introducing dissension between father and son; but my heir must relinquish such absurdities with him who introduced them to his weak brain."

"Again I must speak, both to Father Cyrillus and to you, my lord," interposed Albert: "it is no longer my wish, nor my intention, to enter the service of the Church." These words brought a gleam of satisfaction and surprise to the father's face: it was now the Dominican's turn to suffer.

"My son," he began, but his voice faltered, and he paused to collect himself. Not only were his cherished plans thus threatened, but the remembrance of the mysterious Liska made his blood curdle with sincere horror. With a suppressed groan, he clasped his hands tightly upon his breast, and remained silent.

"If you care not to be a monk," said the baron, "why object to marrying the daughter of Count Otto? Why refuse to fight for the Emperor?"

"Because, if I fight, it must be where my conscience calls me; if I marry, it must be where I love."

The young man pronounced these last words, so new to his lips, with embarrassment, and a slight color suffused his pale cheeks. The baron stared in angry amazement.

"Then, since you have become so much less a saint that you can think and utter such words as 'love' and 'marriage,' why refuse the match I have arranged for you? Ludmila of Riesenbergh is young, beautiful, of suitable rank, and rich far beyond any thing I could have hoped for you. Why not love her?"

"Because—" Albert began, and then stopped, not in

confusion, for he seemed to have been gradually collecting his forces as the discussion proceeded, but as if doubting whether it were well to say more.

"Because? Finish, sir! I would know this near cause which keeps you in opposition to my wishes. Speak! None but a coward shrinks from owning his motives!"

Albert bit his lip at the taunt; and the monk, who watched him closely, saw that light kindling in his eye which even he had never dared to kindle.

"Because," he repeated, deliberately, "I love elsewhere."

"So"—Zahera roared rather than spoke—"it is thus I am deceived! Thank your robe, holy man, that I do not bind you neck and heels and pitch you from the battlements! And for you, boy, you have tried penance and fasting often enough under his rule: you shall try it under mine, and we shall see which will best teach you truth and honor. Who, what, where is this love?"

"I know not; but I have sworn my truth to her. With this ring did she plight her faith to me; and Heaven so help me as I live and die true to her, be she of this world or another!"

He drew the gauntlet from his left hand and held it forth steadily to his father's observation. Father Cyrillus, too, drew nigh; but, after a moment's earnest gaze at the ring, staggered back, half senseless, against the strong arm of Sir Adolf, which was held out to stay him.

"The fiend! the fiend!" the monk uttered, in a tone that reached only the knight's ear. It was the last gift he had sent to Marila, while he still thought her his.

"By Heaven," burst forth the baron, "it is the ring I sent by Count Otto to his daughter! How, in the devil's name, came it here?"

Sir Adolf now felt curious to see the cause of so much trouble. He too looked, and fell back with a half-uttered

ejaculation, which he dissembled in a cough. "The ring I gave to Conrad for saving my life at Scharndorf," he said to himself.

The baron now seized his son's wrist with the grasp of a vice. "Understand, Sir Albert of Rabenstein, that I am weary and disgusted with evasions, with faltering, with lies. I have endured them too long, and I command you now to say whence came this jewel."

"Release me, my lord!" replied Albert, in the low, concentrated tone of suppressed passion. "Release me; for I answer no man thus!" His eye was fixed on his father's with a look that made those around shudder, and he on whom it rested read more in it than could others. There was a minute's suspense and almost breathless silence, and Zahera relinquished his hold, saying, "True: my son should not speak but in freedom."

"Of this I speak not at all further than I have already spoken. If you have no other commands for me, my lord, I will withdraw."

"Stir not until you hear me. Choose now between riding with me, fighting under the banner of Rabenstein for the Emperor, and marrying the heiress of Riesenbergh, and a cell in the lowest dungeon of the castle."

"I have chosen."

"You refuse?"

"I refuse, now and forever. If I am your son, I am no serf, to be collared and led like a beast of burden to labors in which I have no profit and no hope. I live free, or I live not at all."

"Ah, that is well! I might have forgotten in my care for you. My son you are; my serf you also are; for she who bore you was a serf, thrall of my soil, my property, as is the horse I spur, the hound I kick! Such shall you live and die if you will not obey me as a son. Choose."

Albert heard with a proud smile and a flashing eye, while his breast heaved with the violence of his emotions. He drew off the remaining gauntlet and threw it on the ground; removed his helmet, which he also threw down; removed the surcoat, on which the arms of Rabenstein were richly embroidered in silver; loosened and dropped with the rest the corslet that protected his broad chest, and then spoke:—

“A serf you say I was born: a serf, then, will I live until my own hand shall break my bondage. Thus I trample on all nobility but that which God gives in a strong mind and a pure heart! Thus I spurn all wealth wrung from the sweat and groans of others who are also God’s children! Thus I scorn all ties made by pride and covetousness!” He dropped on his knees, and his voice, still clear, became softer as he continued:—“My mother, what you were I will be, until your blood, by which my heart beats, your brain, by which mine thinks, shall have wrought out my deliverance and your glory!” He arose, and stood with head erect and eye fired with that enthusiasm which is almost frenzy.

The baron seemed paralyzed for an instant; then, recovering his former anger and inflexibility, he shouted, “Ho there! bring fetters for the serf!”

No one stirred, and Albert spoke. “Zdenko!” he called, firmly; and Zdenko came. “You heard the baron’s orders?”

The serf nodded and entered the castle, whence in a minute he reappeared, bearing the fetters and accompanied by an old man, once the keeper of the dungeons, who, between old age and disuse, had nigh forgotten his office. With a trembling hand, Bethlen proceeded to his duty of placing shackles on the ankles and wrists of his young lord. Zahera looked on until it was done, and then said only, “To the eastern tower.”

Meantime, the heiress of Riesenbergh had stolen gradually near to her doubly-betrothed, losing no glance of his beaming

eyes, no tone of his ringing voice. Her pride and courage arose with his; and, as he walked steadily away, she said in her heart, "To-morrow night! to-morrow night!"

The monk found himself cursed in his own wishes. Sir Adolf was somewhat in the same plight. The rest—whether true subjects of the Emperor or pledged to aid the free cities—were vassals of Zahera, and knew him too well to interfere between him and his humors, lest bad might become worse. All were annoyed, anxious, all mentally powerless, save the young, spoiled child of rank and fortune,—the loving, and therefore the hopeful and strong and self-sacrificing. One cautious glance of intelligence exchanged between herself and Zdenko was the only external sign of interest in the scene which she evinced; for she veiled the kindling of her eye by her dark-brown lashes, and mastered by a powerful effort the tremulousness which pervaded her frame. One only of the crowd that looked on dared to speak: this was Bercthold, who, as his young lord walked off, forced his way through the standers-by, and, falling on his knees before the baron, ejaculated, with clasped hands and with tears falling over his cheeks, "For his mother's sake!"

Sir Adolf expected to see the old man brained by a blow from his lord's mace; but Zahera answered, with a strange tenderness of look and tone, "Even for her sake, he must be my son or nothing!"

As if without any special intent, Ludmila sauntered towards the doorway, and entered just after Albert and the warder had disappeared within. She had won the heart of old Bethlen by the kindness with which, from nature and training, it was her habit to treat the old; and he was by far the oldest resident of the Rabenstein. The best meats, the goblets of choice wine with which Bercthold served her, were placed by her before the trembling octogenarian, whose air of second childhood touched

her just feelings. She now glided after him, sure of being unrebuked should he observe her, until he stopped with his charge, who took the torch from the old man's hands, while the latter unlocked a door.

"Ah, woe the day when I make you a prisoner, my blessed child!" said the old warder; and he wept as he spoke.

"On the contrary, you now make me free," returned Albert, with a soothing and encouraging voice, and laying his hand over the good servitor's shoulder. "I am free now from a thousand doubts and cares that have enslaved me. Give me prayers, not tears, kind Bethlen; and thank God that I yet live to think and labor for the lowly, among whom your lord has now placed me."

Screened by the darkness of the place, unsuspected, Ludmila too wept, while her heart struggled with an infinite longing to rush forward and throw herself into the arms of her betrothed. She noticed carefully the spot, and escaped unperceived. On reaching again the light of day, she found the throng in the court had dispersed for their noontide meal; but there still lay the pieces of mail which Albert had thrown off. Had it been midnight instead of mid-day, she would have snatched them up and pressed them to her lips and heart. While she looked on them with tearful eyes, the armorer approached, hesitated on seeing himself observed, and then, as if reassured by the expression of the seeming youth, took up the glittering steel and the blazoned surcoat and turned towards his shop with a sort of groan. Ludmila joined him.

"Best give those to Berethold," she suggested.

"That's what I mean to do. Poor old man! he's wellnigh heart-broken with this day's job. He has carried our young lord in his arms, and is older, I've heard him say, than the baron. Ah, if Baron Albert were like other young men——" He paused; but there was a world of meaning

in his manner. Ludmila looked him keenly in the eye, and asked, in a low tone, "Could you make a key?"

The man nodded intelligently.

"There is so much to be done now that you must need to work at night," she continued. Another nod and quick glance answered her, and she withdrew satisfied.

Entering the retainers' hall, she attached herself, as often before, to the warder, and observed that he had separated the key of Albert's cell from the huge bunch to which it had been attached: it hung alone at his waist; but how was it to be got off? Full of hope, however, she chatted kindly with the old man, asked him questions of old times at Rabenstein which he loved to hear and answer, and received at last what she wanted, an invitation to come to his room at supper, where they could talk quietly. Next to find Bercthold. She listened at the door of the banqueting-hall; but the guests were eating in silence. He had taken refuge in the seneschal's room, where he sat with his head buried in his hands, and uttering deep sighs, that found an echo in the heart of his young charge, active and decided as she was. But, stifling what she felt under what she hoped, Ludmila seated herself by the faithful minstrel's side, and, taking his hands in her own with gentle violence, insisted on his looking up. "Father Bercthold," she said, "Bethlen has asked me to sup with him to night. Now, as I wish to be as much entertainer as entertained, you must get me some of the best wine, and any thing else you think the poor old soul will like, that I may take with me. And you must wake up, and not sit moping here in this stupid way. I wish you'd find Zdenko for me: I want to see him."

The minstrel kissed the soft hand that enclosed his own.

"You are a ray of light to this dismal scene," he said.

"Well, then, you are to write a poem on me to that effect at once, and persuade Albert to help you sing it. Now re-

member my supper, and send Zdenko to me at once. I shall be somewhere on the ramparts."

Not a little reassured by her manner, the old man hurried off on her errand, while she lounged on the rampart, awaiting the serf's attendance. He came, and a few words sufficed to raise him from the depths of gloom to new life. The extravagance of his joy would have displayed itself so as to attract the surprise of the nearest sentinel, but for the countess's caution. In five minutes all was understood between them, and Zdenko had departed; but Ludmila remained, walking to and fro, humming scraps of ballads, and now and then stopping to aim a pebble at some bird that she saw balancing itself on a twig on the hill-side below, like the idle boy she seemed.

In the valley, men were practising with bow and sling, knights and *lanzknecchts* careering as earnestly as if the foe were before them, while a few serfs looked stolidly on these proceedings, which concerned them less than it did the horses, for, if the latter sometimes received blows for refusing to obey hand and heel, they also received caresses for suppleness and docility. Many thoughts, strange to the age, and to the usual education and habits of one in the social position of the heiress of Riesenbergh, crowded through her brain, and all the offspring of her love. She, who would once have spurned a suitor whose shield wanted as many quarterings as her father's, felt now an actual pride that Albert stood thus alone, strong in himself, rich only in God's gifts, and resolute to stand or fall by their power. And then she gazed from the men glittering in armor to those in suits of coarse woollen or ill-dressed skins, asking herself whence and why was this distinction, which made one human being the thrall of another no better constituted than himself. It was a question smothered too deeply under the might which makes right, for so young a thinker; but the wrong was felt if not

analyzed, for by it lay her betrothed in chains and darkness, not under parental, but feudal power. As the afternoon advanced, she grew more anxious. Would chance favor her, and would her resolution hold to profit by the chance? She lingered on the rampart until the sun began to sink behind the mountains, and the active groups below were dismissed and began to return to the heights, and then descended to keep her appointment with Bethlen. In the seneschal's room she found Bercthold just placing on the table the cates which she had required of him. Ludmila took them from his hands with a smile of acknowledgment, and, heedless of his entreaties that she would wait until he summoned a boy to carry them, bied away to the warder's apartment. The old man looked eagerly on the flasks of wine, the delicately-cooked game, and the confections, and then he said, querulously, "You can have all these for a few songs, which my life-long duty does not entitle me to."

"Never heed the life past and future, but sit down and enjoy the present," said the seeming Ganymede.

"Not yet, not yet: I must attend to my young lord first; but, God help me! how can I eat and drink such things as these, while I am serving him with hard bread and cold water?"

"Hard bread and cold water is a better diet for him than for you; and so he'd tell you himself."

"That he would indeed, boy; for his head and his heart are always more for others than for himself."

"But meantime, as 'tis cold and damp there below, and your prisoner but weak from his late wound, we sha'n't miss this one flask; and it won't concern you if I drop it somewhere in the dark."

When they descended into the gloomy depths of the dungeon, she perceived that he trembled, partly from agitation, partly from the chilly damp of the place. With some diffi-

culty he fitted the key, which his companion's delicate but firmer hands had to turn for him; then, giving him the wine, she awaited his reappearance, when locking the door, she retained the key as if without thought, and, while insisting on his supporting himself by her arm, asked him question on question about his prisoner, which he readily lent himself to answer. Thus she led him unsuspectingly back to his apartment, drew his seat to the table, and, taking another by his side, said, "Now, father, this wine is what you need; and while I stay here, you shall not want it. Drink to Baron Albert's speedy release, and to the freedom of all mankind!" The old servitor drained the goblet without heeding the last clause of the sentence, and sat for some minutes in silence. At last he said, "You are Bercthold's pupil; and he could tell you, if he would, that there is rarely more than one way of release for any whom the baron chooses to hold, be it in love or hate."

Ludmila shivered. "But his own son!"

"His own son who thwarts his will——" Evidently he dared not say more.

"Well, father, we must hope. I begin to find that's about the best thing we can do in this world."

Bethlen chuckled a little at this grave statement of the experience of his youthful companion. "Hope never harms us, to-be-sure; but if you stay here much longer, you'll learn not to put so much faith in it."

"Then I shall certainly run away; but, hope or no hope, you must eat your supper, old friend, for your fasting won't help anybody."

Attached as the old man was to his young lord, he was past the age when the sensibilities affect the appetite: so he permitted the countess to do the honors of the little feast, ate and drank as she pressed until he grew more cheery, when, as she hoped, his unwonted potations made him

sleepy. She had thrown the key carelessly on the table to evade any suspicion, and, seeing it thus safe, he thought no more of it. After various little starts and uneasy motions, the rosy god proved victorious, and his old victim subsided into a sleep which the betrayer knew would not be short nor easily disturbed.

She lifted the key noiselessly, hurried from the room, and gained the court unobserved. It was now dark, and the ruddy light from the forge told her that her words had not been forgotten. Putting the instrument of freedom into the armorer's hands, and with it a piece of gold, "Be speedy," she whispered.

Without a word, he set himself to work to take the impress of the key in wax, performed his job as expeditiously as possible, and replaced the implement in her hand. She regained the warder's room with all speed, with an inward thanksgiving heard the heavy breathing of the sleeper, restored the key to its former position, gazed with a sort of filial compassion on the withered features and silvered hair of the unconscious host, and felt glad that she had not tampered with his fidelity, which might have swerved before his regard for Albert.

Early the next morning she received the duplicate key.

Zahera gave no further evidence of the scene that had passed, save that on the next day his eye was more restless, and his step something feeble. He had a long private interview with the newly-arrived Dominican, the results of which were carefully enclosed for the vicar-general.

The third evening came. Old Bethlen, accompanied by his ordinary assistant, had paid his last visit to his young lord, locked the dungeon, and deposited the key carefully in his girdle. The inmates of the castle, high and low, were noisy over the last meal, and Berethold's harp rang loudly through the din of voices. Ludmila had chosen the safest hour for


her enterprise. Torch in hand, she glided along the dismal way, fitted her new key, and with a heartfelt prayer for success turned it in the wards.

As the heavy door yielded to her pressure, the joy she felt had nearly caused her to sink fainting on the ground. Albert lay sleeping soundly on a bunch of straw in one corner of the den. She threw the glare of the light full on his eyes: it aroused him, as she had expected. "Is it morning?" he asked. In another instant he was fully conscious, and sprang up, beholding, to his amazement and almost alarm, the light form of Liska, with the chestnut tresses waving around her shoulders and graceful arms, and her blue eyes lifted timidly to his face with a glance that made him forget the past and the future.

The young girl had scarce seemed more like a phantom when she had risen before her betrothed beneath the mystic moonlight, than now. Her face looked pale, and firm almost as marble; her eyes, after the first warm ray which shot forth to meet and welcome the tenderness of her betrothed's dreamy orbs, became cold and earnest even to sternness. No word was exchanged, as she placed the torch against the wall, and applied herself to unclasping the shackles, which, she had observed when Bethlen put them on, were of the lightest and loosest. Albert started as she touched his wrist, for her hand was as cold as the steel. His hands freed, he released himself from the fetters that confined his ankles. His visitant then gave him a flask of wine she had brought. He drank; and, as he threw back his head in the act, a worse token of degradation caught her eye,—the serf's collar on a throat which might have served a sculptor as the model for that of an Apollo. Ludmila shuddered with anger and held forth her hands, as if asking permission to remove it; but the young man shook his head with an air of melancholy pride, and, taking up the fetters he had thrown off, awaited her

motions. She led the way then, signing to him to lock the door when they were without, and he entered the unknown subterranean with a sort of wonder whether the earth might not yawn beneath their feet, and precipitate them into a sphere where preternatural beings of some order might be awaiting them. No matter: what had the upper world for him, oppressed, degraded as he was, in comparison with the love which now lighted his darksome way? And when the last barrier was passed, and he found himself standing in the soft and dewy night of earth, for some moments he could scarce understand or believe his position. He was weak, giddy, and leaned against the nearest tree, with eyes closed, expecting, when he reopened them, that his companion would have faded away like a mist-wreath. But she still stood near, motionless and apparently preoccupied as himself.

Then by degrees, yet strong and well defined, arose the realities which encompassed him. Theories of freedom, acts of benevolence and brotherhood, have their difficulties and their merits with the high-born and high-bred; but the consciousness and repute of worldly superiority is as often a support as an obstacle to such theories and acts; and it would be hard to find the most powerful and generous minds willing to dispense with that consciousness and advantage. Albert was young to be thus tested; yet, in the presence of all those whose courtesies he had been wont to receive as their feudal superior, he had heard that he was less in the scale of social existence than the least there who was capable of bearing arms. To be willing and desirous to elevate the serf was a very different thing from being willing to find himself reduced to the serf's level. Perhaps, but for the mysterious and inborn repulsion to the baron which existed, like himself, he knew not how or why, he might have wavered. No man's strength or weakness can be pronounced on save by trial: as it was, although stunned, no idea of yielding entered into his whirling thoughts



and emotions. His guide suddenly recalled him to present action by extinguishing the torch and resuming her course. His frame was so weak from his recent wound and from his prison-diet, his muscles so cramped by the fetters, that the difficulty he found in keeping at all near her, gave a mysterious character to her light, swift motion, which seemed rather gliding than walking. Instead of continuing to his own usual home, Ludmila turned to the right, passing the minstrel's hut, and, after a sudden turn around the base of the hill, paused by the low and wide-spreading boughs of an ancient beech. Her betrothed, too, paused at the distance he had hitherto maintained; for he knew not how to approach or address her.

"Eblis!" the young girl called, in a loud, yet silvery tone. The music of the voice, and the name invoked, sent a mingled thrill of delight and awe through the hearer. Breathless, and with straining eyes, he awaited the result.

The echo had scarce died away, when there sprang forward—the young man knew not whence—what seemed in the dim starlight the very phantom of a majestic horse, which, with a low neigh, laid its head caressingly on the shoulder of the summoner. Liska placed her arms around the animal's arched neck, murmured a few gentle words, as if to an intelligent being, and then said to Albert, "Mount and to the pass! You are wanted and waited for!"

He threw himself across the horse, as if under the direction of an irresistible power; and, when he looked again for his directress, he was alone. Utterly confounded by all that had chanced, yet resolute to know what further surprises might be in reserve, the young man gathered up the bridle, shook it over the neck of his mysterious courser, who, for aught he knew, was possessed by some infernal imp, and went on at a mad gallop to the spot indicated. In an hour he entered the deep gorge. Zdenko was watching for him: his men were

assembled; his favorite horse was held by the rein, ready caparisoned. He dismounted like one in a dream. The black horse lingered a moment, as if to know if there were further orders for him, and then wheeled and galloped back. Albert grasped Zdenko by the arm. "Do I dream? Am I mad?" he asked.

"Child of my heart, my sister's child!" the serf answered, embracing him passionately; "you are free!"

At that word Albert mechanically raised his hand to his neck: it encountered there the symbol of thralldom: he was *not yet free!* Exhausted in mind and body, the sickening sense of disgust he experienced completed his prostration, and he sank into a deathlike swoon, from which he recovered to find himself carefully supported in the arms of some of his men, and pursuing the route to the fortress of Weinsperg.

* * * * *

Dire was the horror and affright of poor old Bethlen, when, on unlocking his young lord's cell the next morning, he found no occupant within. His first resort was to the minstrel-boy, whom he found watching the sunrise from the ramparts with great admiration and composure.

"Well," said the audacious intriguer, in reply to the disclosure, "you know 'tis not my fault, for I've not been with you since night before last; and I saw you put the key in your belt before I left you. However, I'm not afraid to go with you to the baron; and, if he can harm one so old and one so young as you and I, he's worse than a mad bull; and I'll tell him so, if he tempts me."

The old servitor stood with open eyes and mouth before the braggadocio effrontery of the swarthy stripling, and this last, though something afraid of attracting the particular attention of Sir Adolf, finally resolved to seek the good knight's intervention, out of compassion to the warder's fears. Berethold *also* was summoned to the deliberation, and Zdenko was

sought, but not found. He, then, was the guilty one. But how?

The knight decided then on seeing Zahera alone. He disclosed to him at once and briefly the flight of his son and the statement of Bethlen.

"The monk! the monk!" exclaimed the baron.

"He is as ignorant as you or I, on my knightly word!"

Zahera kept silence; but the convulsive twitching of his face and working of his clenched hands betrayed fearful emotions.

After a few moments' painful silence, the baron spoke abruptly, in a choked and trembling voice,—

"To-morrow I will start."

"To-day, then, I will take leave of you, my lord. Where there is much to be done, he who is not of use is greatly in the way. I am only sorry that our roads are different, as I would gladly have the honor of bearing you company."

In fact, the knight was both anxious and impatient to get home. "For, if the devil has not carried away the young man bodily," he said to himself, "I shall find him there, if I'm any judge of faces." Perhaps, too, he might learn something of the ring,—the greatest mystery of all. "For how, in the fiend's name," he thought, "could it have flown from Conrad hither?" And then, after being given to Count Otto, here it was again! As to questioning the baron as to his own possession of it, after the scene in which it had so lately figured, that was not to be thought of. He gladly, therefore, mustered his little retinue, and, after all due exchange of courtesies with his host, took his way homeward.

Early the next day, the gallant train of Rabenstein departed from the safe seclusion of its fortified heights, with banners dancing on the breeze and shrill sounds of warlike clamor breaking the echoes of the mountain-side into rare and pleasant discords. At the head of his band rode their

still stately and powerful leader. Berethold, too, was at hand; for what nobleman could ride forth as became his rank, without the minstrel to record the deeds of the present, and incite to new efforts by the rehearsal of ancestral valor and renown? But a sturdy, common rustic bore his harp; and, when asked where was the dark lad whose voice was so sweet and eye so bright, the old man answered that his parents were not willing he should go forth into danger. In the rear, escorted by the servants of the vicar-general, rode the Dominican, too much absorbed in painful and uncertain thoughts of the past and future to discover that he was in reality a prisoner.

* * * *

It was no part of the policy of the Vicar-General of the Dominicans to betray to Father Cyrillus any suspicions of the latter's soundness of faith. So, with John de Wyckliff's *Triologus* in his possession, (discovered in a midnight search of the cavern, by Zahera's permission,) he avoided every thing doctrinal, as if there could be no question of his subordinate's fidelity to the Church,—who, not to come into collision with this seeming confidence, was obliged to answer such questions as his superior chose to address him. Thus the latter learned, as if for the first time, the vocation of the heir of Rabenstein for the military priesthood, and bestowed warm commendations on the monk for having brought his teachings to so pious a result; and then, too, he learned his defection and in Father Cyrillus's honest belief its cause. "Your distress in this matter shows your zeal and fidelity towards your pupil and holy faith, my son; but it is needless. This is but the temporary misfortune of inexperienced youth. Trained as he has been by you, he must overcome these delusions: the enemy of mankind cannot long hold his sway over an unsullied heart in which the good seed of the true religion has taken root. Be comforted, therefore."

The sagacious vicar-general knew well enough that the prey he had marked must all be secured at one swoop. So linked were they that to seize one until all were within the net would be to put the rest to flight. By degrees, he had learned many things concerning the fair Anna, whom Janow befriended, more than Sir Henry had told him,—many things concerning her father, which, coupled with what he already knew and could evolve from Father Cyrillus's history, led him to bring the monk, as if casually, into the young girl's presence. He was at once satisfied of some secret understanding between them. Anna, whose tell-tale complexion betrayed every shadow of her emotions, grew pale as death on hearing the name of the strange monk; while he revealed his interest to the premeditated observer by the prolonged and earnest look he fixed on her. How much there was that the ardent Bohemian burned to be able to say to her, yet could not, and, if he could, dared not! It was the assurance of comfort, too, not of grief, that the vicar-general read in the monk's manner. He had gained another link for his invisible chain.

Father Cyrillus received orders to join the Dominican convent at Beuren.

The vicar-general knew very well what he was about. The Emperor had raised the siege of Ulm, unsuccessful and irritated. The forces of Wurtemberg had sustained a bloody defeat before Reutlingen, and their next point of attack would be Beuren. This, he was satisfied, would be reinforced by the recruits no longer needed elsewhere. On this ground he acted, and despatched instructions to his coadjutors.

The citizens of Beuren had scarce contemplated even the possibility of assault, and consequently were but ill prepared for defence. Therefore, when the advanced guard of the Governor of Suabia appeared suddenly and silently before the great gates of the town, the warden admitted them, and

disorder and exaction with them. Free quarters and entertainment were demanded, and, perforce, granted. In vain the warden remonstrated: the captain and his marauders laughed in his face; and the former carried on a thriving trade by selling exemptions under the signature of Count Eberhard, which, pasted on the doors of the purchasers, should secure them from present annoyance and from future danger on the entrance of the count and his army. The warden was not without prudence, although somewhat slow in his exertions, and began secretly to muster such citizens as he could entirely trust for counsel and for defence. Fortunately, on the third day of the turmoil, while the main body of the intruders were absent for plunder among the dependencies of the town, leaving only a sufficient guard to keep "the hogs of burghers" in order, a new set of applicants appeared before the gates, requesting admission in the name of Ulm, the perpetual director of all the free towns, and bearing despatches sealed with the seal of that great city. The guard were in the minority, and the warden and the citizens hurried to the gates in an intoxication of joy to admit this unexpected relief. The soldiers within readily preferred enrolling themselves in the service of the town to being thrown into prison; so that, on the return of the band at night, they found themselves distinctly without quarters, unless they were inclined to billet themselves on certain four-footed denizens of the surrounding mountains, more noted for taking than for giving suppers.

Early next morning, three persons stood on the bartizan of the western tower, looking earnestly sometimes on that portion of the enemy encamped at safe distance from the walls, sometimes to the west, whence the main body were expected. The foremost was Albert, the leader of the men sent by Ulm. At a respectful distance behind him were Ludmila and Zdenko. They wore the distinctive dress of the station they

acknowledged,—that of serfs,—with the difference that Albert only wore around his neck the badge of servitude. The chestnut locks of the young countess were cunningly fastened and hidden beneath the large straw hat of a peasant, her delicate skin and the expression of her features changed by the brown unguent Berethold had taught her to apply. To all but Zdenko she was Ulric, a lad in attendance on their leader,—which attendance the loyal serf managed shrewdly to make chiefly a nominal matter, without exciting the notice of his master. The only troublesome question the young Rabenstein ever addressed to his new attendant was as to how he came in possession of so magnificent a steed; to which he replied, gravely,—

“I stole him.”

Albert commenced a sort of homily on hearing this cold-blooded confession, which the supposed boy cut short, by exclaiming,—

“See here, sir: if I take him back, I myself shall be again stolen; for he who owns the horse also owns me. Now, which is worse?—I, who take from him a brute which he does not need, or he, who takes me from myself, by forcing me to apply to his use, because he is the strongest, the limbs, the faculties, the understanding, which God surely gave me for my own?”

At this Socratic reply, delivered somewhat pertly, the leader of the serfs bit his lip and turned away. Ludmila exchanged a merry glance with Zdenko, and also moved off to conceal her smiles, wondering if he would question her often.

At present the three were occupied with anxieties and even self-reproaches. Albert was thinking of Father Cyrillus, from whom he had been so abruptly parted, and of whom he could not soon hope to recover any trace, and reflected with a pang on his ingratitude towards his devoted instructor in

having felt a sense of relief at being freed from his supervision. Zdenko, too, was unhappy about the monk, whom he had obeyed with so much love and reverence until he had known Ludmila. As for the latter, her heart was heavy with thoughts of her imprisoned father, whom she had expected to join at Ulm, whence she had been so suddenly and unexpectedly turned aside. A deep and unconscious sigh caused Albert to turn around; he beheld her eyes swimming with tears.

"What ails you, boy?" he said, kindly, and laying his hand on her shoulder. It was a contradiction to the oft-urged laws of sympathy that no responsive thrill warned him of some mystery about the boy. The young girl during the short period of her disguises had learned how much easier it is to deceive by truth than falsehood. She answered, therefore,—

"I was thinking of my father."

"And why did you leave him?"

"He left me to follow the Emperor; and then I desired to follow you."

"And why, my poor child?"

"It was Berethold put it into my head. But do not ask me any more questions, my lord, for I shall not answer them."

The simplicity of the answers, and the childish petulance of the last remark, would have disarmed suspicion had any existed.

"I have no right to ask what you do not wish to tell. But remember, when you say your orisons, never to forget to thank God that you have a father for whom you can shed tears."

At this allusion, uttered in a tone of profound melancholy, the young girl's eyes overflowed with a sympathy she could not express in words, and which was not understood. At this moment their attention was called to a sudden activity in the party without the walls, occasioned by the approach of three or four men from the northeast direction. They were ap-

parently detained a few minutes, and then came onward to the city, when they recognised in the foremost Father Cyrillus. Albert dashed down the stairs of the town like a madman, ordered the gates opened, and received his old friend into his arms. The good monk could not have been more agitated had he seen his pupil arise from the dead. But they had scarce time for congratulations, when the sentry on the western tower announced the approach of the forces the citizens were dreading. For nearly an hour, the warden, with Albert, the monk, and many of the principal burghers, watched the long train winding slowly through the valley; and when at last it was near enough for the full sound of the warlike clamour to fall on the ear, the bray of the trumpet, clash of the cymbal, and thunder of the drum, the dazzling whole stirred in the heart of the excitable and enthusiastic young student of Rabenstein emotions so new, so magical, so controlling, that, while he looked and listened, he felt as if war were the sole end, the sole glory, of man's existence. The first foam this of Circe's cup; but alas for those who reach the dregs! The warden pointed out the position of the different leaders by their banners, as well as distance would permit. "The standard of the Holy Roman Empire first," he said; "next that of Wurtemberg, the three stags' horns on which Count Eberhard hopes to impale us."

"He may chance instead to shiver his antlers against us, as against Reutlingen," said a citizen.

But, as the train gradually evolved itself from the sinuosities and inequalities of the road, the lookers-on grew grave. It was no child's play that threatened; while, like a huge serpent preparing its coil, the army deployed before the little town.

By degrees the ramparts became thronged with anxious gazers. At last a small band separated from the main body and rode slowly towards the gates. A herald and pursuivant

came first, and behind them, to Ludmila's dismay, rode Henry of Lichtenstein, at the head of a party of her father's followers. Instinctively she shrank behind Zdenko. A parley was sounded, and the summons of the Governor of Suabia for the surrender of the town delivered.

"And in case of our refusal?" replied the warden.

"Then the Governor will raze the walls of your town and put to ignominious death the ringleaders of this rebellion."

"Bear to the Governor the answer he has already received from Ulm and Reutlingen. We will no longer submit to his exactions on our property, nor his insolent tyranny over our persons. We have entered into solemn confederacy against him, with the rest of the cities; and, however small our means of resistance may seem, we will not draw back, like cowards, from our compact."

These words, uttered with spirit and decision, were received with loud acclamations by the crowd on the walls.

"Sound, herald," said Sir Henry, "and announce to those citizens who may have purchased protection in the name of the sovereign prince, Count Eberhard of Wurtemberg, that such protection affixed to their doors shall insure them safety when he shall enter the city."

"And I, too, announce," retorted the warden, "that any citizen who shall dare to make use of any such disgraceful safeguard shall be regarded as a traitor, and his goods forfeited for the benefit of the town during its siege. Do I speak your minds, good burghers and mechanics who hear me?"

Another roar of assent and applause rent the air.

"Your blood be upon your own heads!" returned the young knight, angrily, and reining back his steed. In the instant's pause, ere he wheeled, he bent a scrutinizing glance on the foremost group. In her eagerness to hear and see, the heiress of Riesenbergh had forgotten herself. She now saw her

error; for Sir Henry, with studied and severe courtesy, lowered his lance, and, bowing to his saddle-bow, backed his horse as many paces, in retiring, as he would have done from the presence of the Empress, keeping his eyes fixed pointedly upon her. The countess felt the indignant blood rush to her cheeks and brow; but the consciousness that her swarthy dye hid the suffusion prevented the embarrassment which must otherwise have marked her manner. The question now was, would Sir Henry dare to betray her? and she thought not.

Fortunately for Ludmila, the worthy warden, having received from Father Cyrillus a full history of the leader of the serfs of Rabenstein, insisted that the young hero—for such he termed him—should become his guest, with his personal attendants. Thus, aided by Zdenko's care, which, like that of Berthold, was reverent and paternal, she was relieved from all that might have tended to betray her.

The siege commenced in good earnest. All the engines known to the age were brought to bear upon the devoted town; but, strange as it may seem, the citizens were in advance of the nobility in military knowledge, in tactics, in discipline; and those of Beuren possessed the inestimable treasure of cannon, though few, from which stones could be discharged far more fatally than from catapult or balista, and the flash and smoke of which infected with overwhelming terror the minds not only of the common crowd, but even of those who might pretend to enlightenment; for they beheld, in the flame and smoke and sulphurous smell, the characteristic illustration of the father of evil. But the besiegers had vastly the superiority of numbers; they were unconfined, too; they could forage through mountain and valley, while the supplies within the walls were daily decreasing without prospect of replenishment. Starvation, and consequent surrender, seemed inevitable at no remote period; stout burghers became gaunt, and rosy dames pale; when it began to be re-

marked that the good friars of St. Dominic still held their own, in looks and spirits, for which they alleged the favorable countenance of their patron towards their piety and good works.

The besiegers lay chiefly on the north and west of the town : here, therefore, the principal attention of the besieged was directed. By the south tower dwelt the warden ; and there was Albert's home when off duty. As his dusky page watched one afternoon the shifting hues of a rosy twilight from the southern rampart, her eye, ranging carelessly from point to point, caught a dark object in motion on the edge of the wood that skirted the hills at some little distance. Could it be the waving of a bough ? No : there was scarce breeze enough to stir a leaf. As if by instinct, she turned her glance to the Dominican Convent. The appearance, whatever it might be, was in a direct line with it. Accustomed from the first dawn of understanding to tales of war, she immediately took the alarm. Some treason was on foot ; and she resolved that her betrothed should have the credit of detecting it. Here a well-known step made her heart beat, and the voice which followed did not still its flutterings.

"I am glad to find you in a safe place, Ulric," it said.

"And I am glad to find you here, my lord——"

"Hush : call me captain only."

"My lord captain," she continued, with a light laugh ; "for I want to tell you that something appeared suddenly beneath yonder tree just now, which I could almost have fancied crept from the bowels of the earth. See ! it is in a right line with the Convent of St. Dominic."

"And what of that ?"

"I don't like the Dominicans : they are the Pope's friends ; and the Pope's friends are those of the Emperor, and the enemies of freedom."

"Where did a child like you get such ideas ?"

"Stole them where I stole my horse," was the answer.

"But I am not so much more a child than yourself, captain. I am nearly eighteen."

"You must be an elf, then."

"I'm often thought so. I wished I were when I saw what I told you of, for I should have transported myself to that tree, the one next the rock——"

"You do not observe that what you could distinguish half an hour ago it is impossible for me to see now."

"Very true. I am looking with my memory instead of my eyes; but, believe me, there is something wrong going on."

"We must then keep more careful watch here."

"I could tell you a better way than that. Let somebody hide in the tree after dark. I could do it."

"I would not place you in such risk, my boy: you would fare badly were you discovered."

"The elves will guard me for relationship, my lord; and you see it must be a confidential embassy."

"I must perform it myself, then."

"You are too much needed within to risk your life without. Captain, let me go, I adjure you, by *that* ring——"

"What do you mean, Ulric?"

"Nothing, only that I've seen you look at it as if you could refuse nothing asked in its name. Is it a fairy-gift?"

"Go to, boy: you are pert."

"Do you expect any thing but mischief of an elf? I dare say that ring came from one of my relations."

This teasing agitated Albert strangely, it seemed to him to harp so oddly upon his mysterious adventures. He stood plunged in thought; and when, after a short pause, Ludmila laid her hand on his arm and said, in his native tongue, "My lord, you will not refuse me?" he caught her by the wrist, exclaiming, "What are you?"

"A Bohemian, and your page, captain; but, if you are going mad, I shall beg leave to get a new service," she

answered, in the boyish style she had adopted. The young man dropped her hand, and walked away with a heavy sigh.

"I will let you go with Zdenko," he said, after a time. "I can trust your faith, but not your discretion. You must return before dawn, and the guard shall have instructions to admit you. But I do not like it."

"My master,"—it was the title Ludmila loved best to use to her betrothed,—"I will risk no danger, I assure you solemnly. Let me go alone: one may escape notice better than two."

"You are a strange, bold youth."

"Do I not tell you that the elves will protect me? and I am not without other safeguards."

The night was dark and threatening when the adventurous girl issued from the gate of the southern tower; but she had marked too closely the tree she wished to reach, and the ground between, to stray from the direction. It required no great astuteness to connect Henry of Lichtenstein with the Dominicans through the medium of the vicar-general, and thus with some sort of mischief to herself and Albert. As she neared the object of her design, she half drew her knife from its sheath to feel sure that it would answer her grasp readily. The branches grew low from the bole of the tree on one side, and without trouble she ascended and seated herself to await the result.

For more than an hour she sat in the quietude of her solitary elevation. The sounds of the city became gradually hushed, its twinkling lights had nearly all disappeared, and she was beginning to feel terribly sleepy, ere any thing occurred to call her attention. At last there was a distant rustling of branches, then footsteps slow and clumsy, like those of coarse laborers. As they approached, the watcher began to hold her breath; and, when they reached the foot of

the tree, she began to wonder, with a comic spirit which never quite deserted her, which would be most frightened if by any chance she should lose her hold and tumble down upon the new-comers.

"We may as well sit down a while and rest," said a voice in the unpolished accent of a peasant; "for old father Simon's fat legs never reach here at the right time."

"And 'tis no fool of a load this," replied another; "the fattest hog I've seen this year. Whew! Ah, well, we're always well treated when we do get in."

"So there is a way to get in," thought Ludmila, highly elated at this confirmation.

"Now, do you know that the folks inside there are wondering what keeps the good monks so comfortable when every body else is growing thin? There's many an irreverent knave that won't scruple to take a look inside yet: so 'tis a good thing that the larder is under ground just now."

"There's one of them lean enough,—that new one, Father Cyrillus."

"Yes: they do say he's a sort of a heretic, and that's the reason why nothing thrives with him."

"Ah, I can't say as to that, for there's the mad count, the Governor: he is stout enough, and there's no sort of heresy too bad for him if it will serve his turn. But come; let's be getting under the rock, and be ready at the grating, for it will be nigh as slow work to drag this old fellow along as if he were on his four feet again."

With this they arose; and their voices gradually died away, amid grumblings and ejaculations, as if the passage they entered was rough and difficult.

"Now, if I dared to follow them!" thought Ludmila; but it was clear that she might thus lose what knowledge she had gained, and she was about to slide from her post and run back to the town, when a faint noise checked her. She heard a

dragging, rustling sort of sound, then a long-drawn breath, as if of some one relieved from annoyance and fatigue.

"I can never get through that subterranean without feeling as if I were passing through the valley of the shadow of death," said one; but this time the voice was that of a person of education.

"And 'tis no heaven we emerge into, after all our pains," said another; "for it seems to me we are between Scylla and Charybdis in this matter."

"Cease thy profane comparison, brother Francis, and remember that in serving the reverend vicar-general we serve our Holy Father the Pope, and also the Emperor."

"But if some of these rebel citizens, whose policy is above their piety, should catch us before matters are finally arranged, I suppose there's no heresy in doubting that the Holy Father would think any of us worthy the miracle of raising from the dead."

"We have nothing to do with that: our affair is to manage rightly between the general and this Henry of Lichtenstein; to get this runaway heiress secured before we negotiate finally for the admission of Count Eberhard into the city."

"The sooner the better, then. There's our signal to move on, thank the saints,—for this waiting is not at all to my taste."

The unsuspected listener, too, saw a fiery arrow rush upward through the air and then dart towards the earth. To the uninformed eye, it was but a meteor. The two speakers walked on in the direction whence it appeared, and, when they were beyond hearing, Ludmila made all the speed she could towards the gates, where, at a preconcerted signal, the postern was opened for her by Albert himself.

"Thank Heaven, you are safe back again," he said. "Let me see if the fairies have not changed you;" and he flashed the light of the torch he held full upon her face. Instinct-

ively she threw her hands before it, and he saw that they shook fearfully. Without further words, he threw his arm around her slender frame and almost carried her to the house of the warden. The situation did not serve to relieve her agitation; and, but for pride and womanly shame, how gladly would she have betrayed herself, and told all she had done and suffered! Mute and confounded, she suffered herself to be borne along by the strong arm of her unconscious lover; and when he placed her upon a seat in the ordinary family-room of the house, big, scalding tears rolled down her cheeks like rain-drops. Albert looked on thoughtfully for a moment. "This is a strange mood for my elfin page," he said. "Come; tell me what has happened to you, and what has frightened you."

"Frightened me?" repeated Ludmila, endeavoring to collect herself. "If I were to be frightened, I should not have been there, or here."

"Pardon me, then, my tiny hero, and tell me what has disturbed you."

"My master, you know I will answer no questions about myself. For the rest, I will recount faithfully, and on my oath, if you desire, all that I heard; for, of course, I could see nothing."

"This must go to Father Cyrillus," he said, after the recital.

"So I thought, my lord; and, as it will not do for you to send for him, lest it should excite suspicion, I will watch for him early to-morrow morning."

When Ludmila discovered Father Cyrillus the next day, the action on the northern walls had become too hot to admit of any possibility of conversation with Albert. Giving him, therefore, to understand that she had a private communication for him, he followed her, as if without intent, to the house of the warden, when she related briefly her adventures of the

previous night. The Dominican heard the page's story with anxiety, but without surprise.

"Tell your master," he replied, "that the library of the convent probably contains a plan of its recesses; but at all events, at all risks, I will get the clew to this matter."

As Father Cyrillus's chief resort was the library, he could pursue his researches there without suspicion. All that day and the next he labored earnestly in his search, stimulated by the din of warfare which reached his ears. He thought of the stern valor and silent sufferings of the burghers, and the holy cause which brought them forth,—of their pining wives and children, and of the daily-darkening prospect that Beuren must yet fall into the hands of the enemy; and he strove on, until every sense ached with the anxieties and labors of his quest. At last it was rewarded. A time-worn parchment, evidently untouched for years, was discovered in a secret repository which would have escaped any one less interested and energetic than himself. He studied the plan carefully, made a copy, and, concealing it carefully on his person, issued forth to explain and confide it either to his pupil or the page. With the first there was no possibility of converse: the second he found scarce out of bowshot from the point where the efforts of the besiegers to gain a position, and of the beleaguered to keep them off were raging most fiercely.

"Oh that I were a man, father!" exclaimed Ulric, passionately, all forgetful of disguise in the excitement of the moment. Fortunately, the words applied aptly enough to the present character and position of the speaker.

"The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong," replied the monk. "Come with me, boy, apart from this tumult, and I will show you how your keen eyes, quick wit, and steady courage have been of more use than all the weapons on these ramparts and the brawny arms that ply them."

Ludmila followed him into a vacant room of the tower,

where he laid before her the parchment and explained thoroughly its complicated lines.

"To-day I shall enter this subterranean. If ever I emerge is in the hands of Heaven. To God it may seem fit that I fall a sacrifice; but, whether I live or die, if I am detected, this asylum for treason would still be in the hands of the enemies of freedom. Therefore, it is necessary that your master should understand this and have the means of making the search, should I be seen no more. God bless you, my child! and, remember, it is no light thing that you have won my trust."

"May God so help me as I deserve it, father!" said the countess, with overflowing eyes, as she bent her head for his blessing.

With an earnest "*benedicite, fili mi*," Father Cyrillus withdrew to his hazardous enterprise. There were two entrances to the passages beneath the convent,—one from a little oratory of the library, the other from the cell of the Superior. The seeker, of course, chose the first; and, kneeling in a manner prescribed with exactness, on a stone before the altar, found himself, with a mixture of satisfaction and anxiety, sinking slowly from the level. Holding a cresset so that it might run the least risk of extinction, he descended, murmuring a fervent "*Deus noster refugium*" in his perilous progress. The motion ceased, and he gladly found himself upon a firm basis.

After familiarizing himself with the method of ascent, the monk began to examine the appearances around him. The subterranean was partly under the natural rock and partly supported by buttresses of coarse but substantial masonry. He stood in its centre, or thereabout, from whence more than one gallery diverged, and concluded to follow first the main one to its termination; and taking off his sandals, lest an echo might betray him to some familiar of the place lurking

around, he pursued his dreary route barefooted over the cold and flinty path. But little cared he for this, whose robust frame had been wasted by self-imposed penance, and whose feet had often bled in midnight rambles over rocks and thorns around the Rabenstein. When, as well as he could judge, he was beneath the Superior's apartments, he examined the wall closely with eye and hand, and finally perceived a narrow opening to the right, half filled by a square pillar. This he entered, and, continuing his examination, found that a space, corresponding to the size of a door, was but a skilful imitation of the wall it had displaced. With fingers tremblingly alive to each variation of the surface, he sought, and, after some moments, found, the means of admission. The profound silence satisfied him that he was safe in entering; and the door, thrown wide open, displayed an untenanted apartment. Occupants it would soon have, however; for a bright fire and wax candles burned within, and a small table was spread with the daintiest of fare. The probability was that some one from without was to be entertained here.

Father Cyrillus looked around for a hiding-place. The apartment was of comfortable size, and hung with thick woollen drapery to protect its guests from the dampness of this underground region, and at sufficient distance from the wall to admit of his standing behind it undiscovered. He had time to compose himself in his position, ere the door opened, and two persons entered.

"Confess, Sir Henry," said one, "that what you so irreverently called 'a rat-hole' may be as comfortable as any other place."

"I spoke indiscreetly," was the answer; "for at least I should have known that so old a rat would have his larder well supplied for a siege."

"Sit down and try it,—remembering, however, that you're

not to give me such a fright as when we last dined together."

"Provided you avoid the provocation."

"On the faith of——"

"What?"

"Of a hungry man in so good a meal. Now to our negotiations. The Emperor, when you last conferred with him, continued in doubt of the loyalty of Count Otto of Riesen-berg?"

"Yes, on the proofs given him of the indulgence extended to the count by his captors, and of his continued and friendly intercourse with their great man, Habenicht. So his highness said since he was so comfortable there, he could remain, which would save himself the trouble of finding him a prison. He has, however, graciously permitted it to be intimated to Count Otto that to break off the promised alliance of his daughter with the now-declared rebel, this youth Rabenstein, would be an important measure."

"Which he received according to character?"

"Stormily enough, to-be-sure; and the Emperor, being very well satisfied with my services so far, permits me to hope many things not yet plainly expressed between us. The Count of Riesenberg has no son: it would be hard to dispossess his daughter for no fault of her own; besides, she is much loved by the Empress. Still, the fief is important: it must be in safe hands; and, to conclude, I am allowed to sigh over her name and to hint at two hearts that have been growing together from childhood."

"And you are *still* willing to take her?"

"Still and *still*, under every emphasis you may be enabled to place on the word, so long as she can sign herself Countess Riesenberg," retorted the knight, in an acrimonious tone. "I like her well enough, and should not feel quite secure in the domain without her."

"And if I can place this town in the hands of Eberhard of Wurtemberg, I shall be secure of his influence, which is great——"

"While it lasts."

"The more need of haste—sure of the Emperor's entire faith in my abilities, fidelity, and zeal; sure of being Count Henry of Riesenberg."

"Amen! But there are other considerations than our private views, which cannot wholly be set aside. My children overhead, and, in some sort, I myself, greatly prefer that the worthy citizens should voluntarily come forward to ask the paternal forgiveness and blessing of Count Eberhard the Riotous. It is a bad time, now that heresies are creeping in on various points, to lose influence over the flock here by showing ourselves as taking so decided a part against what they think their temporal interests. But, if these camels continue to hold out against hunger and thirst, I give you my word that you shall have all the glory of discovering the secret entrance and of leading your men thereby. Yet this 'rat-hole' affords various advantages, which we should thus lose."

"No doubt of it," answered Sir Henry, in a tone as dry as his companion's: "but the point is, as this convent and the order will live long after you die, whether you should not take care of yourself to the best advantage."

"Don't I tell you the citizens are camels—perfect camels? They'll last a month longer; and, as you know, we have our mutual uses for this avenue before it is thrown open to the public. I must have this Ozias safe out, for we can do nothing with Anna until we can bring him before her; we must have the page, lest ill luck may produce disclosures that would throw difficulties in our way; we must have this Albert of Rabenstein, for it is best for you that his head should roll off under conviction of treason; and I must have Father Cyrillus for a mischievous plotter of heresy and rebellion. We

have talked this over enough heretofore for you to understand that each one is wanted to aid in securing the other; and we must have them quietly, that none may have the chance of watching. As to your heiress, say as little of her as possible before Count Eberhard. I wonder he has kept the other fancy so long."

"Because he is as obstinate as a boar, and, moreover, took the whim that this girl is just such a character as he could frighten into loving him to distraction."

"I think I've seen cases of the sort,—sensible men who loved their wives with the most chivalrous constancy for no apparent better reason than the fear of their tongues; lovely women who would have sacrificed their very souls for the good of some one as reckless as Eberhard, and be thankful for a blow, so it might be healed with a kiss. And I've seen women without head or heart rule such men with rods of iron, and cheat them of name and fame, by counterfeiting the slavery which suits their vanity so well."

"You have had other interests, then, than crucifix and rosary?" laughed the knight.

"Content you: I've worn other habits than this robe, and played other parts than that of Vicar-General of the Dominicans. But this is from the purpose. I can really do no better for you than I have said. I will leave written orders with the Superior, whom you have seen, and an exact copy for you. Perhaps your lucky star will expedite matters. You have my voice with the Emperor, with whom I am gaining ground; and it will be strange if you do not entirely succeed."

"I must content myself for a while longer, then: so now, with your leave, I will return."

"You must pardon us for blindfolding you," said the vicar; "for even I have no right to reveal this for light cause."

"If you will blindfold me no farther——"

"No: it is a matter of mutual trust, and we must so regard it. I will put the heiress in your hands at the earliest moment."

They went out. The monk, so soon as he could suppose them at a safe distance, hurried forth, and, regaining the point at which he had descended, ensconced himself to await with what patience he might, the return of his spiritual superior. In a few minutes, he saw a faint stream of light, at first in motion, then stationary: then he heard the voice of the vicar-general, hard and cold, even in the low key in which he spoke.

"Jew," he said, "awake and listen to me."

A faint sound, as in reply, reached the monk's ears; but the words were not audible.

"Have you decided to confess your agency in removing these women and their wealth from the Governor's protection?"

Again an indistinct murmur was heard.

"Remember, I warn you fairly that your contumacy will make it the worse for them as well as for yourself. A free pardon awaits your confession: the consequences of your silence you will learn at Nuremberg, too late for repentance. Do not dream that I shall not find witnesses enough against you, if you force me to seek them."

The listener understood as little of this as of the prior allusion to the "runaway heiress;" but he treasured this also. There was a short silence; then the light and footsteps moved onward, and the brave monk, always reckless of mere self when he could serve another, decided on venturing to exchange a word with the Jew, whose merits he well understood and valued. Groping his way to the opposite side of the centre-gallery and into the first which led from it, he felt noiselessly for the door, which he knew must be near.

"Oxias!" he whispered: "Oxias, if you are here, answer me, in the name of the only God!"

"Who speaks there?"

"I dare not name myself; but the jewelled clasp the heirloom placed in your care?"

"Thanks be to the Holy One of Israel! Is it your father?"

"How came you in this dungeon?"

"Taken prisoner in endeavoring to convey news from Ulm to this place."

"And the clasp?"

"I was compelled to deliver it up in the mountains of the Fichtelgebirge."

"And to whom?"

"Agents of the vicar-general."

"Strange! for it has been restored. Can you tell me no more?"

"No, no. But I am glad that you need not doubt the Jew's honesty."

"Never fear. What women are those of whom the vicar-general asked you?"

"The wife and daughter of Lewis, a rebel citizen of Esslingen, the latter of whom Count Eberhard is resolute to have in his power, and the vicar as resolute to place her there."

"Mother of Mercies!" And Father Cyrillus shivered with dread and amazement. "I dare not linger to ask more," he resumed. "You may hope now, since I have discovered you; for, though in much danger myself, I am at present free. Hope and pray, therefore, good Ozias; for God has aforetime brought the children of Israel out of as great tribulation as this."

"It is a miracle and a comfort to me to hear your voice, worthy father; and I doubt not of your doing all that may be for my deliverance."

"Good-night, then, my son: you may sleep the sleep of innocence and faith in Heaven."

Father Myrillus had not long been out the next morning on his duties of comforter and surgeon to the wounded amongst the defenders of Beuren, when he encountered, in that quarter of the town occupied mostly by artisans, a dense and agitated crowd, though swayed by widely-differing emotions. Some laughed; some uttered words of scorn and anger; some looked on anxiously and even fearfully; while many gave vent to tears and loud exclamations of affright and penitence. In their midst the monk discovered a Dominican, considered in the convent to be somewhat disordered in brain, from the effect of fasts, vigils, and penances too frequent and severe upon a weak frame and a mind too acutely sensitive. For several days past he had been wilder than usual, talking much of visions which had commanded him to go forth to the rescue of the city and its inhabitants from the snares of the great enemy. One sentence heard, and the new listener recognised the action of the vicar-general to hasten the surrender of the place. With loud voice and earnest accent this seer uttered stern admonitions, pathetic entreaties, and solemn denunciations: he described the citizens in as fearful rebellion against the living God as were the Israelites at the foot of Sinai, and, like them, as worshipping a golden calf in making an idol of their commerce and of the heresies and license which they called liberty. He bade them look well on the warnings Heaven had already vouchsafed, in the famine which was slowly and surely devouring them. He told them that angels and saints were watching and weeping over their plight, interceding day by day for yet a little more time for their repentance, and that he had been charged, in dreams and visions of the night, to hasten forth and declare these things, and to preach unto them that the day of grace was vanishing, the retribution at hand, and that the guardian spirits who had so long averted their merited doom were sorrowfully preparing to depart, wearied and vexed by the hardness of heart

of those for whom they had watched and prayed. Such words, uttered with the fervor and sincerity of mania, produced, naturally, a powerful effect on many. Even Father Cyrillus, conscious as he was of the whole machinery, found himself moved by the eloquence, the pathos, and the fire of this bewildered prophet, whose undoubting belief in his own inspiration was the strongest surety of success. How was this to be counteracted? he thought, as he passed on. But the hour for his interview with the page was approaching: it was necessary to assure Ulric of his existence and to reveal such discoveries as he had made; for he knew not what a day might bring forth. Strengthened by her previous knowledge, Ludmila listened to the conversation between Sir Henry and the vicar with all needful composure; but at the mention of Ozias there was a start and a look of interest, which led the monk to ask if she knew him.


"Of course I have often heard of him, and know that he has done many things for the cause of liberty," was the reply; "and to think now of his being in such a plight! Good father, can we not help him?"

"By God's will, my son. Remember, he is but one, however deserving; and for one's sake, even my own, I cannot place the city in collision with a power so formidable as that which upholds him. Tell your master that the arrow which reaches Henry of Lichtenstein will have done good service."

"But little hinders that I sped it myself, if I were but strong enough!" exclaimed the young girl, indignantly.

"Well, patience: your turn will come. And now farewell, my son, and probably until to-morrow."

The stout warden was not without his adventures and perplexities; for, as he returned at nightfall from his double cares of civil and military guardian of the beleagured town, he found his own person in a state of siege by a throng of half-frantic women,—a position which, had the good German been



at all classical, would have reminded him forcibly of Orpheus and the Mœnades. As it was, unexpectant of danger to life or limb, he simply thought of getting off before his tympanum was cracked by the clamor. With loud wailings and tears, the supplicants told him of the inspired prophet who had come forth from his holy seclusion to teach the way of safety; they pointed to their pale and meager children; and one, a young wife and mother of seventeen, fell on her knees, holding up the shadow of a babe, and, in desperate forgetfulness of all save the dire assailant, *malesuada Fames*, tore open her bod-dice, and, exhibiting the attenuated frame, where once the swelling fount of life had given forth its plenteous treasure, exclaimed, "Food, food for my child!"

Tears swelled in the good man's eyes; but he said, "My wife and children also hunger. You must wait like them until God sends help."

He then fled ingloriously; but he had scarce concluded his frugal supper, when a solemn deputation of the husbands presented themselves to ask for the surrender of the city ere the enemy were too much exasperated to spare it, quoting the warnings of the half-crazed monk, that they should repent while there was yet time. Had the guardian of Beuren lived in the Palace of Truth, it is highly probable he would have asked the deputation whether they would be as ready to take up arms at the entreaty of their wives, as they were to desire their defenders to lay them down; but, being intoxicated by no such dangerous atmosphere, he was enabled to say, instead, that they must give him time to recover from the surprise of such a proposition, before he answered it, with which unsatisfactory reply he dismissed them. So soon as they had turned their backs, the warden relieved his feelings by pouring out the whole force of anathema—and, if he did not remember all the words, he had a very sufficing

idea of the substance—on the head of the mischievous Dominican.

Early the next morning the wild preacher, his imagination heated by the effect of his eloquence of the previous day, recommenced his labors, and roamed as before through the city, uttering frantic predictions.

At last he paused before the dwelling of the warden, to utter against him wild denunciations for his contumacy in doing battle against the Lord's anointed, and to declare that the guardian spirits of the place were even then abandoning its dwellers to wrath and desolation.

"Behold!" he exclaimed, wrought to the highest point of excitement and self-delusion by his success in calling around him a disturbed and terrified crowd; "behold, even now they plume their spotless wings: they cast their last looks of mingled indignation and pity upon you. I see, I see them soar aloft——"

A loud shout of laughter arose from those around. "True! true!" they said, "for see where the feathers are falling;" and at the instant the fanatic's eyes met a shower of down, floating around the top of the house, where stood a slight boy scattering abroad the contents of a large pillow. The bewildered preacher, met thus abruptly on his own ground, and the heat of his imagination cooled by this practical application of his visions, gathered his mantle around him and hurried off, leaving the well-known page of the brave leader of the serfs in possession of the field. But this diversion, timely as it was in averting the superstitious horrors that were gaining on the minds of the people and would probably have resulted in their throwing open the gates to the enemy, could not avert the famine that was stealing on them. The warden was again beset by entreaties, and almost threats, that he would surrender.

"In God's name, friends," he answered, "are you so

ready to sell your birthright of freedom for a mess of pottage? If you hunger, so do I. If your wives and little ones are less plentifully fed than heretofore, so are the men who fight for you. So, ho! Ulric, tell your master it imports that he come to me."

The crowd stood beneath the northern tower, at which point the battle was then raging. Promptly and fearlessly the young girl did her errand, and Albert answered the summons. Scarcity of food, and over-exertion of mind as well as body, had done their work on him, and added ten years in age to his appearance. Yet, emaciated in face and form, the fire of genius and indomitable resolution was still there,—the power of heart and head. All flushed with the excitement of the strife, with a hopeful smile and brilliant eye he stood by the warden's side and inquired his wishes. The official answered by addressing the crowd.

"Good burghers and craftsmen," he said, "it has been often asked among you who is this youth, who counsels like Turpin and fights like Roland. I will tell you now, that, if there is courage, truth, or shame in you, it may appear. Here stands Baron Albert of Rabenstein, noble by as many descents as the Emperor himself,—with many a village of patrimony, many a hundred of peasants and serfs, under his power; yet this nobility he has abjured, this wealth he has forfeited, that he may give his brain and arm to the service of liberty. And there, upon yonder ramparts, fight the stoutest and boldest of your defenders, the thralls that have followed him hither, to risk all they had—their lives—for the love of him and the desire of freedom, which our laws give to every man the moment he enters these walls. Many of these poor souls have already poured out their life-blood, to cement, as it were, and strengthen those laws and that liberty which you would desert. Oh, shame upon such free citizens! You are of those who, because the messengers from

Ulm and Reutlingen were interrupted, and I was duped into admitting a party of the Governor's vanguard, dared to accuse me of treachery! But you are marked, every man of you; and when the siege is raised, how will you look, who have not only turned your backs on the good cause, but are thus striving to undermine it? By all the saints that ever yet wrestled and died for the truth, it will be well for you if I do not thrust you forth to the mercies of those retreating wolves, instead of letting you drag out your base lives under the contempt of every honest man."

The crowd shrank together, as if each man would have hidden his own shame behind that of his neighbor, more sensitive perhaps of the presence of the brave stranger than even of their warden's hard words. Albert seized, as by intuition, the right moment, laid his hand with a firm but gentle pressure on the shoulder of the official, whose honest anger trembled through every limb, and said,—

"Good friend and commander, thirty of my brave true brothers have fallen, never more to rise; ten more lie sorely wounded. Sure am I that I can discover, in the citizens here assembled, forty who will well and cheerfully fill those vacant places, who want only the hope which mischievous tongues have destroyed, to keep them as brave and patient as any who are enduring hunger, pain, and danger above them, in the certainty that their toils and sufferings are not in vain. Speak for yourselves, friends. Do I judge you rightly?"

His full and penetrating voice, his eye, which, without commanding, possessed so strange a power of insuring obedience, reached the better impulses of those he addressed. At once those who had most striven to conceal themselves became the most eager to press into view.

"Give us weapons, sir captain," they shouted; "give us some other foe besides hunger to fight with, and we will never fail you, until you fail us."

"To the armory, then," shouted the warden: "there are weapons and to spare. God grant there were hands enough to use them!"

During this scene, Ludmila had stood at the side of her betrothed, and, as it progressed, she instinctively, almost unconsciously, placed her slender hand within his, as if both to gather and impart new hope and courage; and he in turn enfolded and pressed those gently clinging fingers within his own strong palm in sympathetic assurance. When the crowd, following their new impulse, hurried after the warden, Albert lingered, and, turning to his page, looked into the clear, uplifted blue eyes, until the flash died from his own, and a sad yet serene glance took its place.

"Ulric," he said, in a tone lowered almost to a whisper, "every day that you are with me I feel stronger, slight, mischievous elf though you are. When I grow weary, and almost hopeless, in this struggle, it is enough that you place your hand in mine, that you look into my eyes, as now, and I grow more hopeful: my soul grows stronger, the world looks brighter to me, I feel more patience with life and more faith in Heaven. It is all a mystery to me, and tempts me almost to think that you are, as you jest, an elf of the wild wood, for your eyes are like the crystal waters of my native glens, and your voice like the song of the spring wind through the forest. Were I a dreamer, as heretofore, by those waters and beneath those forest-shades, you should wander by my side and know no harder service than to bear my bow. But here, amid famine and slaughter, I will not be so selfish as to keep you."

He paused, arrested by the expression of his listener's face, over which a cloud of terror came; and the little hand clung nervously to his, with a mute entreaty the lips would not frame.

"You are drooping like a violet that has been torn from its

emerald throne by the hill-side; and when this town falls, as it may, and I with it,—for I will not live unsuccessful,—who is to secure your young head from all the horrors that are to ensue? By some means, I must send you away ere the worst befall us; and in happier days, should they come——”

Ludmila again lifted her eyes, in which two large tears hung glittering, like dew-drops on the violet to which he had compared her. Her lip curled with something like its usual mischief; and, answering, “I share no master’s joy whose sorrows I may not share,” she drew her hand from his, and walked away as haughtily as a youthful prince turning his back on a recreant subject. Had her betrothed understood women as well as he did books, she would have borne no secret away with her after those parting words, which only a woman’s heart could have felt, a woman’s lips uttered.

Albert looked after the retiring youth; but the voice of the warden shouting lustily for Captain Albert recalled his thoughts. He hurried into the tower, where he found his new recruits equipped and awaiting him.

“Set them to work,” said the warden, “and then come with me.”

There was work enough, and readily found: so, after placing the worthy craftsmen under the temporary direction of Zdenko, where they were likely to find that culling leaves from the tree of glory was a more severe process than hewing boughs from any other tree against which they had ever raised an axe, Albert followed the guardian of the town as he led the way into the deserted guard-room of the tower.

“For the love of Heaven, my lord,” he there exclaimed, “as you would have the blows you have struck for liberty avail us, ride forth this night and declare to our friends at Ulm how sorely we are beset. I am too old, too clumsy, to attempt such a thing with hope to achieve it; and, moreover,

these malcontents are used to me : they obey me as much from habit as duty. Now, the first being the strongest curb of the two, the moment my back was turned they would throw open the gates, unless prevented by your turning your arrows and battle-axes from the enemy to them. Do you understand this?"

"Clearly."

"Well, then, as you've seen that I am no coward, I can ask this of you, as the only youth in the town to be successful in such a deed of *derring-do*; for you are the only one trained in knightly exercises. Will you try it?"

"With God's help, it shall be done," replied the young man, to whose morbid temperament the proposition, the necessity of some violent exertion, mental and physical, was the only introduction to a healthy existence, and consequently, though he knew not why, the most exquisite happiness. "With God's help!" he repeated, solemnly. "But, my good friend, there is scarce a horse left among us; and of the few we have, I doubt if there is one to be trusted for such a job as rushing by Count Eberhard's outposts. Even my own active bay is but the ghost of himself, nor have I lately dared to give him much thought, save as a meal in reserve; but he must finish his career in a good cause, and——"

The sound of the opening door interrupted him. Ulric entered, and with but slight salutation placed himself by his master's side.

"In good time," said the latter. "Ulric has made a discovery," he continued, addressing the warden, "which it is needful that you know before I leave. Our spiritual brothers, the Dominicans, have somewhat glorified themselves that the slender fare to which the siege has reduced us has been blessed as a sufficiency to them in reward of their piety, while the citizens are pining with hunger."

"Yes, and there are plenty of fools to be gulled by it: else I should not hear these clamors for surrender."

"We supposed they had secret stores for an emergency; but, better than that, they have a cavernous outlet through which they receive the miraculous gifts which keep them in health and strength, and through which they also communicate with the enemy."

"A thousand devils!" ejaculated the warden in his wrath; and he swore, no man of his dignity ever more furiously, that he would burn the place and the reptiles in it.

"Patience," said Albert: "they are too venomous to be disturbed without caution. Ulric, tell his excellency the whole story."

Ludmila obeyed.

"And so Beuren must be bartered in settling the intrigues of these two gamblers. But the vicar-general does not wish to give up so convenient a secret; and we have now four days' grace to decide whether we'll let in Count Eberhard the Riotous, or keep him out at the expense of a quarrel with the fathers of the Inquisition. Here's a predicament; and it will take more brains than I have to get out of it."

"You must depend on Father Cyrillus. The vicar will extend those four days if possible: he relies on our capitulation to rid him of his share of the bargain, and, to hasten it, he sent forth the insane preacher who has raised such a panic."

"Thanks to Ulric, his homilies are ended. They want your tutor and you also, these conspirators: when they get you, I'll batter down their rat-trap, if I burn at the stake for it."

"There's no danger for me in the few hours before I leave: so forget it all until I am gone to Ulm—to solicit aid," he continued, in reply to Ludmila's inquiring look. "Go you now with his excellency, and see if there be a horse fit to bear me."

"You will have to call on the fiend to furnish one, my lord—they say he helps people in that way now and then; for there is nothing mortal in the town that could carry you but to a funeral." So the startled girl managed to answer in her usual way of boyish indifference; and with the last word she slid out of the room as abruptly as she had entered, lest the tremor that seized her should be observed. Hurriedly ascending to the very topmost turret of the tower, she sat down, and gave way to her tears and alarms. "The Empress was right in calling me mad," she sobbed. "It is not here as at Rabenstein, where I had Berthold to take care of me: here I can neither help him nor myself; and now he will be slain, and never know how I loved him!" One hope alone sustained her: Eblis was still strong and fleet, thanks to Zdenko's devotion to his young mistress; and, if Eblis should save her betrothed, she would not have followed him for naught.

Suddenly an increased clamor, differing, too, from the ordinary sounds of the attack and defence, startled her,—an uproar that seemed to arise from within the town, and in which the shrieks of women were mingled. Rushing down the steep stairs of the turret, and thence to the very verge of the rampart, heedless of the danger to which she exposed herself, she discovered that an unexpected attack had been made on the western tower, the outer gate of which seemed about to yield to the force brought against it; and a second glance showed her the pennon of Henry of Lichtenstein, and, worse yet, the banner of Zahera. Turned at the hurried tramp of feet, she was caught by Albert's arm and placed within the door whence she had emerged, before she had well seen him. "My child," he said, as he released her, "what keeps you here?"

She made no reply, but, waiting until the last of the band had passed on their way to repel the fresh attack, hurried after them, not frightened, but with an agitation, a strange

eagerness, a new sense of strength, of thought and courage. She felt a fierce pleasure in the thought that Albert would now meet Sir Henry,—and that the latter must be crushed like a reptile; for the horror of falling into his power stifled compassion. She felt angry at the cries of the women, which she thought would encourage the enemy; and, entering the west tower with the soldiers, she hurried down into the street, where, dashing among the first group who stood shrieking and wringing their hands, she exclaimed, in a voice so rich and clear, so full of inward power, that it at once arrested their confusion,—

“Can you put so much strength to no better use than such a din, which might of itself frighten any foe, if it did not teach them how weak the men must be where the women are so fearful?”

“Ah, my God! my God!” they continued, “what will become of us? What else can we do?”

“Yes, what else can we do?” retorted one dame, of that class of spirits to whom an antagonist is always a blessing: “and of what use are you, hopping about here like a tame starling, and abusing us?”

“I’ll tell you what you can do; and you, good dame, may have spirit enough to begin it. ’Tis a trick I learned of an old soldier. Take your big washing-kettles, fill them with beer, and, when it boils, let it rain down on the heads of those who are beating so loud to be let in at the gates. It will be the best day’s washing you ever did. Start, every one of you; and, if your husbands won’t help you, scald them too!”

The women looked wonderingly at each other and at the slender page, doubtful whether his words were to be acted upon, when out spoke a stout blacksmith:—“The best advice I’ve heard to-day. You’ll be as good as your master, boy, if you’re ever half as big. At it, neighbors,” he shouted,

cheerily: "I can do something there myself, though I am too lame to be a soldier."

"You'll not be the less a good captain for that," said the countess, with a graver and more impressive air than she had at first worn. "Take the charge of this matter, my good friend, and rely on me for representing your good conduct to the warden."


The craftsman stared; for the gay boy he had been used to seeing seemed to have undergone some inexplicable transformation, and his very height and breadth to have increased with his change of manner. Lifting his coarse cap in acknowledgment to the subtle essence of rank and privileged authority which thus made itself felt, he shambled away; and in five minutes the surrounding chimneys smoked after a fashion which gave the besiegers the idea of new supplies within.

Ludmila then turned into the lower entrance of the tower. At the instant with a terrible crash some portion of the outer gate gave way; and next, like a living torrent, Albert and his serfs rushed down the stairs into the inner court. With a voice equally stern and loud, he ordered the inner gates to be opened; and, as the warden hesitated slightly, the young man thrust him aside as he would have done a child, threw open the ponderous doors with the aid of Zdenko, who clung to his side like his shadow, and entered the outer court. As he emerged, another fearful crash was answered by the defying yells of the wild Bohemians. One-half the outer gate had yielded to the assailants, and the young baron only reached it in time to defend the breach. Unnoticed by any one, and scarce conscious of any thing but the wish to be near her betrothed, Ludmila had glided along with the crowd. As she expected, the first form she saw struggling fiercely in the gateway was Henry of Lichtenstein. Instantly she seized Zdenko to warn him.

"Mother of Heaven!" exclaimed the serf, all horror-struck; "away from this place, noble——" The countess's hand was clapped over his mouth in time to prevent the conclusion. "Mark that man," she said, quickly, designating the knight by his armor and device; "watch him as you would a wild boar at bay. Kill him if you can; for it is your master's life he wants, more than the city!"

The Bohemian nodded understandingly, and she slid away from the grasp with which he would have carried her to a place of safety.

It was soon plain enough that the object of the knight in blue armor was rather a single combat with the leader of the serfs than any thought of the town; yet, unequal as was the opposition of the half armor of the common foot-soldier (all that the heir of Rabenstein would wear) and the steel harness of his antagonist, the superior height of the former and elasticity of muscle kept the vantage on his side. It was not long, however, before Sir Henry caught sight of the heiress of Riesenbergh. Then faster and more furious fell his blows right and left, and more savagely arose his cry of "Down with the Suabian boors!" and Albert owed his safety at last as much to the blind rage of his antagonist as to his own skill. He himself fought like a madman in one sense,—in the desperate courage which seemed like utter unconsciousness that he had but a human life, pervious to mace and battle-axe. His self-defence seemed merely mechanical; but the blows he dealt had in them as much precision as strength. Twice did he turn aside Sir Henry's weapon with a scarce apparent effort, when, had it fallen, he must have sunk under it, and twice repaid the intended wound with a force that made the knight reel, and the second time brought the blood through a joint of his armor, so accurately was it measured. Now beyond and now partly within the gates raged the contest, as the defending or attacking party gained the advantage; nor



were those on the rampart idle, but kept up as constant a shower of stones and arrows as their diminished force would permit. In the midst of the carnage, Ludmila hovered around her lover, still unseen by him, (for he was conscious of nothing but a foe to be repelled,) still unhurt, as if her very helplessness had saved her. The assailants seemed about to retreat, when suddenly a knight on horseback, who had hitherto hung inactive upon the edge of the skirmish, spurred into the front.

"Seize that slave," he shouted, "who rebels against his master!" and designated Albert of Rabenstein with outstretched hand. His harsh voice, stern, yet trembling with conflicting emotions, his words and gestures, proclaimed the Baron of Rabenstein, even without the blazonry of his shield. A prayer of agonizing fervor, though voiceless and wordless, went up from the heart of the young countess, in the wish that any collision between the father and son might be prevented, even at her own cost. The men rallied at his voice, and Sir Henry, abandoning the conduct of the attack to the baron, gave himself up to the pursuit of Albert with an obstinacy that permitted no doubt of the personal nature of his intentions.

"Turn, slave," he shouted, "turn, when a knight graces you with his notice! Turn, and die in more honor than you can live! Turn, Albert, the serf of Rabenstein!"

The youth did turn at this singular address; and, as he engaged with his assailant, the baron himself spurred on to the spot, followed by some dozen of his men-at-arms. "Hold! do not sully your weapon with his blood," he exclaimed: "he is my thrall: he must be my prisoner!"

But this was no part of Sir Henry's desire; and he exerted himself the more furiously to cut short Albert's life and his betrothal to Ludmila of Riesenbergh. Nor was the risk at this moment slight; for the sudden appearance of the father

had both disturbed the son's self-possession and divided his attention, when a shriek rose wild and high above the clash of arms. Some association connected with such a sound made the old baron look wildly around to discover whence it came. Startled and alarmed, Sir Henry thought for the instant that Ludmila was wounded unto death, and his battle-axe, poised for a desperate blow, hung suspended; but to the defenders the shriek was a rallying-cry, and, when the weapon fell, it struck not the leader of the serfs, but a faithful friend, who devoted himself for his master; and then, ere the knight could check its downward sweep, it entered the shoulder of the youth who had flung himself as a shield across Albert's breast. The slight form shivered, and the red blood gushed from the wound, but no shriek now parted the lips of the reckless page. In a breath the axe was wrenched from Sir Henry's nerveless hands by the infuriated Zdenko, and its owner prostrated by a blow that battered in his helmet and left him senseless. Albert, his left arm sustaining with a powerful grasp the wounded boy who swayed his sympathies so mysteriously, with his right kept at bay those who were striving to execute the baron's orders to take him prisoner, until his followers gathered in front to protect his retreat. But, as they fell back within the ruined gate, a new power came to the rescue. Down from the wall above rushed a scalding torrent of the beverage so sacred to German palates, though far from welcome in the present form of application. Kettle after kettle of potent beer was emptied upon the assailants by the stout arms of the craftsmen whose wives had boiled it. Yells and curses succeeded their cheering shouts, and in a few minutes those who were yet unscathed were glad to fly, leaving many of their writhing companions to the more merciful care of the free citizens.

While the warden attended to the repair of the gate, Albert bound up Ulric's wound so as to check the further effusion

of blood, and hastened to bear his precious burden to the kind care of the worthy official's family. Zdenko assisted in conveying her. Very much troubled was he,—not only for the hurt, but because he knew that Father Cyrillus would be summoned, and the delicate white shoulder exposed in contrast with the swart face and throat. Luckily, before they reached the house, the countess's own ready wit began to act.

"Take me to my own room," she said, faintly, but earnestly, "and let no one know I am hurt."

"But a leech must be had to tend your wound, my boy."

"Zdenko can tend my wound."

He shook his head deprecatingly, feeling that the life of the heiress of Riesenbergh and future baroness of Rabenstein was too precious to be trusted to his slight skill.

"Hasten now in search of Father Cyrillus," said Albert, when they had placed Ulric on the pallet in his own room.

"Delay a little, my master; and leave me a few minutes, that I may talk with Zdenko. It is needful." And the master withdrew, wondering in himself, as usual, why he rather obeyed such a boy than the boy him.

"Zdenko, I was mad to-day: and now, what is to be done? Father Cyrillus will know me as soon as he sees the slightest cause to suspect——" She covered her face with the one hand she could use, and the hot tears rained through the slender fingers.

"Sweet, noble lady," exclaimed Zdenko, "if I might dare——"

"Hush, hush!" she interrupted; for it was easy to divine his thought. "Oh, my good friend! this is but a cut, I am sure. Why cannot you dress it, and spare me this disappointment, this mortification, this disgrace?"

"I dare not, noble countess! I dare not! If any mischance came of it, what would become of your father, the good count, and of my young master?"

"But Father Cyrillus, of all men! Oh, this will make me lose my senses!"

"But, dear lady, how could we trust a stranger with such a secret?"

"True; true. At any rate, Father Cyrillus believes me only Liska, the peasant-girl—the sorceress, I suppose he thinks me. Go, now, and call your master to me."

The young baron stooped over his suffering page and pressed a kiss on the damp brow, to which the warm suffusion of love and shame instantly rushed.

"My master," she whispered, "go you for the good father, and leave Zdenko to care for me. Perhaps it is the last favor your wilful-page will ever ask of you."

"Not so; not so. You will live to fight by my side, with helm on head and spurs on heel," answered Albert, forcing a smile, while his melancholy dark eyes were suffused with moisture as he looked on the light, active form so prostrated, and saw the courage with which the young spirit strove to suppress every sign of suffering.

Ludmila's lip curled, and her eye lighted with something of her native archness at the words of her betrothed; then a thought of the future made the tears again swell and hang heavily on the long brown lashes.

With a sudden impulse, she placed her right hand on the noble head that was still bowed over her, and looked deeply and (to him) mysteriously into his eyes; then, suddenly averting her face, she exclaimed, abruptly:—

"Go, go, while I have strength to part with you!" and Albert gladly hurried off in search of the needful aid. Her eyes followed his retiring figure as the eyes of the dying follow the fading gleams of the last sun that may ever shine for them. "The last, the last!" she murmured, tremulously. "O God, have mercy!" She breathed a prayer for his safety, forgetful of her own.

"Now, kind Zdenko, secure the door, and then bring Father Berethold's lotion."

The serf obeyed, and, in a few minutes, removed the dye from her face and neck and hands with the gentleness of a woman.

"I must recommend you to the Countess of Riesenberg as her tiring woman," she said, faintly, trying to chase the clouds from her attendant's anxious face. "And now wait on the outside, and tell your master that he must not waste any more time over me, but go at once to his men."

Zdenko gave an understanding nod and withdrew, but had scarcely stretched himself like a watch-dog without the door, when his master returned with the monk. Faithful to his instructions, the good serf admitted the latter, but kept the first back, by repeating Ulric's request.

"Strange child!" said the young baron, musingly. "So wild, yet so thoughtful; so imperious, yet so affectionate! I obey him more than he does me. Father Cyrillus would say it is magic. Well, be it so: it seems to me that I have lived all that was worth living under some spell. I've no wish that bell, book, and candle should break it. Look to him, my best Zdenko, as you would to me!"

"Son of my heart, fear nothing for the boy that my love can prevent."

While this delay occurred without, Father Cyrillus had walked to the side of the patient, who, trembling violently with pain and agitation, had covered her face, anxious to retard, if but for a moment, the discovery for which she had prepared.

"Be of good cheer, my son," said the monk, kindly. "Your wound is not so bad, I warrant, as many I have cured."

With these words, he lifted tenderly the hand which lay extended helpless by the sufferer's side.

"What is this?" he exclaimed, suddenly, observing its whiteness. "I thought it was Ulric who wanted me."

Summoning all her pride of birth and rank, the countess bared her face and looked firmly into his.

"Who are you, and where is the page?" he said, hurriedly. Then, perusing her features, he dropped the hand he had taken, and staggered back, overcome by amazement and horror.

"Mother of heaven!" he exclaimed: "are my senses leaving me, or are you——"

"Liska, the Franconian peasant-girl," she answered, in a low tone. At this moment Zdenko entered, with a well-prepared ejaculation at the changed appearance of the page. The Dominican seized his arm with the grasp of a vice.

"Speak!" he ordered, in a voice husky with anger and superstitious dread. "Speak! Knows your master of this?" and, greatly relieved by the turn the question took, the serf dropped on his knees, answering, with a fervor of sincerity beyond doubt, "No, no; I swear it!—But what is this? Is it sorcery?"

"It is a device of the power of evil to bring shame on the champions of truth and freedom," said the monk, sternly. "But, since his emissary bears a human shape, and in that shape has suffered, I must extend human means for her aid."

"Her? her?" repeated Zdenko, as if in a maze of doubt and astonishment.

During this scene Ludmila spoke not, though a faint smile evinced her triumph at the mystification which the weakness of the otherwise astute monk imposed on him; then, the excitement which had sustained her being over, she sank into a state of insensibility, from which she did not fully recover until her wound had been dressed and bandaged.

"Extreme caution, perfect quiet, are necessary here," the monk said, in a low tone, to Zdenko. "Remember, no one

must enter here but myself,—*no one!*” he repeated, with an expressive look. He did not exact a promise from the serf: he was too much accustomed to his blind dependence and obedience.

An hour moved slowly away: another, and Zdenko saw that Father Cyrillus meant to remain, if possible, until his pupil should have departed on his perilous errand; but at last the serf's restless thoughts were relieved by a light tap at the door. The good father was urgently wanted by one of the serfs who was wounded unto death. There was no appeal from such a summons as this; and, with an uneasy countenance, Father Cyrillus departed. Zdenko then despatched a messenger for his master, and it was with a trembling hand that he opened the door to the unconscious betrothed of the wan girl, stricken down in the enthusiasm of her self-forgetful love. Alarmed by the agitation in his follower's manner and look, Albert pushed him aside, and stepped noiselessly to look on his page. A first glance showed him only the changed hue of the skin, and he turned at once to Zdenko for explanation. With a second glance, the recognition flashed through his mind; and he staggered back, aghast and breathless, his pale and quivering lips refusing to frame the words he would have said.

“What says he?” he at last gained self-possession to whisper.

“Father Cyrillus? That it is sorcery,” the serf replied, with a look of perfect ignorance and innocence.

“Of the wound,—the wound?” repeated the lover, nervously.

“That he has cured worse.”

Albert knelt by Ludmila, and pressed his lips softly to the delicate hand which had clasped his so warmly in the morning, now so weak. Whether it was that the action disturbed her, whether it was sympathy, the young girl opened

her eyes, heavy with languor, like violets heavy with the evening dews; but, unlike those dewy flowerets, they gave back an answering gleam to the glance they met; and the pale but beautifully-curved mouth opened slowly, as the rose-bud opens before the warm caress of the sun, into such a smile as Psyche, arousing from her trance, might have given her heavenly love. And the young enthusiast, as Cupid must have done, gathered the smile, with lip as well as heart, ere it faded.

"Liska, beloved of my soul!" he murmured, "is it you who have followed me so lovingly,—who have so nearly lost your life to screen mine? Where would have been its light without those eyes, my queen of fairy-land?"

"Did I not tell you that I would be with you?"

"I have heard your voice in the music of the waters, inhaled your breath in the sweetness of the south wind! But to meet you thus—thus! oh, it is as if the spirit of the evening star had descended to walk by my side!"

"And if spirits descend to love like mortals, like mortals they must suffer. Yet to love truly and fervently, with no thought of self, is in itself a blessing; and, when such love is fully returned, earth can inflict no pang, no suffering, beyond its joys!"

"And this for me!" was all Albert could say, as he buried his face in his hands to conceal the agony that convulsed it.

"Do not grieve for me: my heart is full of happiness."

"But I am mad between joy and fear," answered the young man. He paused in alarm; for the slight flush, which the emotions of the moment had brought to Ludmila's cheek, faded into ghastly pallor. "Here, Zdenko!" he exclaimed, for the serf was discreetly gazing from the window, "here! she dies!"

Zdenko hastened to administer the cordial left by the monk. "Fear not, my son," he answered: "it is weakness

only; but Father Cyrillus commanded strict quiet, and, moreover, that I should admit no one except himself. But I knew you would never forgive me if I concealed any thing from you: therefore I sent for you. Go now, that we may not offend him."

"Go, go!" Albert repeated, as if striving to fathom the meaning of the word. "Mother of mercy," he continued, in agitation, "I am to go this night, with scarce a hope of return! Impossible to leave her thus, suffering, perhaps dying! The warden must find another to do his errand."

"For freedom—for honor!" she whispered, in reply.

"But freedom is to be defended, and honor won here."

"You have promised, my son," interposed Zdenko, gravely.

"Listen to me one moment." He drew the young baron aside, said a few words low and earnestly to him, and he returned to Ludmila with a shade less of despair upon his face.

"Liska," he began, in a tremulous voice, "if I go from you in obedience to your commands, give me one joy in return for so much agony: be my wife——"

"You know not what you ask," she interrupted: "you know not who or what I am."

"And what am I? No longer heir of Rabenstein, as when we met there, but its serf,—all lost but what my right hand wins."

"And lost for me!" responded Ludmila.

"Yet paid a thousand times with one word of love from your lips," he exclaimed. "Ah, Liska, all my courage, all my hopes, are in the word I ask of you. Let me say, as I dash by the watch-fires of the foe, 'She is mine!' and I must escape. When I cross lances with their stoutest and boldest, let me say, 'She is mine!' and I am safe."

Poor Ludmila! there was but little room for pride in a heart where so many sadder and sweeter thoughts were *thriving*; and then, should she yet fall into the power of

Henry of Lichtenstein, the vows her lover asked would stand, an awful barrier, against his force or fraud; and if Albert should fall in this last struggle for liberty, at least she might freely weep her wedded lord, as she might not weep her lover, and live for him alone, in hopes of future union without alloy. No word was said, but Albert raised his hand to Zdenko, who glided softly from the room. There was silence for the fleeting half-hour that he was gone; for the love and fear of the young hearts that beat in that scene of suffering were too strong for words. The serf returned: a Franciscan friar accompanied him; and in a few short minutes more the Baron of Rabenstein pressed the last kiss on the trembling lips of his unknown bride. Then without strength, almost without consciousness, he stumbled along after Zdenko, feeling as if both brains and limbs were transmuted into lead.

The dusky light which had served them finally failed; yet the serf proceeded with a certainty that must have betrayed a prior knowledge of the rooms to any man in the exercise of his ordinary faculties; but Albert was walking in a dream.

They were in a wing of the dwelling constructed by a far distant ancestor of the warden, with concealed galleries and sliding panels, and for two or three generations abandoned on account of the evil repute cast on it by a deed of blood and mystery. They had reached the ground-floor, and, after a few steps in the darkness, Zdenko threw open a door which led them into what had been the kitchen of the ruin. A dim light only entered here, for the windows were covered with dust and cobwebs and curtained by a heavy growth of weeds and neglected shrubbery. The serf closed the door carefully, and then said, in a whisper, "My son, the lady bade me enter here, and call upon the name of Eblis, and you would be provided with the steed you require for your journey."

Albert shuddered, remembering the strange courser which had borne him so furiously through the wilds of Rabenstein.

He looked confusedly around, but saw nothing in the long, low, mouldering apartment which suggested any idea of a temple for the genius of evil.

"Shall I call?" repeated Zdenko.

"As you list," replied Albert. "I cannot think now."

The serf uttered, in a low voice, and with much appearance of dread, the prescribed word—once; twice; but the traditional formula of three times seemed required: perhaps he then spoke louder, but his companion would scarce have distinguished a shepherd's pipe from the blast of a trumpet. At the third summons a huge dark shape appeared, rising actually from the depths of the earth. The impish machinery, however, was but the handiwork of Zdenko, who had converted the steps of an ancient store-room partly under ground, into a sort of inclined plane for the convenience of his young mistress's pet. Yet it sufficed to keep Albert's mind in a state of perplexity as to the character of the visitant, whose eyes glared with a wildness sufficient to establish his unearthly claims. Eblis made his customary obeisance, and then seemed waiting orders.

"It must be the same," murmured Albert. "But come; let us find a way from this place. I cannot rest: I must move, I must act, or——" He passed through the door, which Zdenko held open, and Eblis stalked gravely after; but the instant his hoofs touched the turf of the garden he commenced a variety of violent performances, very much after the fashion in which horses of flesh and blood were wont to recreate themselves. After a few moments' indulgence, his keeper approached, thinking himself sure of obedience; but Eblis, unconscious of the sufficient exercise before him, lashed out with more energy than playfulness, and with a vicious emphasis that illustrated perfectly his opinion of the difference between legitimate and delegated authority. The *young baron*, who had looked for a moment with something

like interest on the animal's power and grace, now turned away. "Leave him," he said, with something like impatience, "and if he is here an hour hence, and a man may mount him, he shall bear me on my errand; for never will strength and speed be more wanted: if the earth swallow him, there is still my own."

As he spoke, the serf with some difficulty dragged open a gate choked with grass and briers, and through an obscure and lonely street gained the front entrance of the warden's house, where the sturdy official stood in waiting. Zdenko uttered a sentence of Bohemian into his master's ear, and hurried off, while the warden led his young friend within, and commenced a strain of advice and instruction in reference to the safety of both messenger and message.

"But you do not seem to hear me," he said, suddenly, observing that Albert sat with his eyes fixed on vacancy and with an air of stupefaction very different from his usual animated attention.

"Yes, yes: I understand," he replied, starting from his seat; "but I am impatient to begone. In fact, I am so restless that if I had to wait another hour I believe I should not be fit to go at all."

"Eat first," urged the warden, pushing him back into his seat, "or you'll fall off your horse for want of strength; and drink, too, for you are as pale, and your eyes as sunken, as if you had seen the Evil One."

Albert shrank at the chance allusion.

"I have brought an extra flask for your journey," continued the good man: "it is Burgundy, pure and strong. Toss off your goblet, and bring some blood into your cheeks; for you look more like a spirit than a human being. And how about your horse? Can you trust him?"

Zdenko's opportune entrance here relieved the wearied listener.

"All is ready," he said, with a cheerful countenance.

The young baron sprang eagerly forward and rushed into the street.

"What ails him?" asked the warden, with some anxiety.

"Perhaps this day's work has been too much for him: he is young, and not yet hardened to such dealings."

The serf only shook his head as they followed, the official bearing the flask of wine from which his companion had fled so forgetfully. As they passed under the arched gateway of the tower, a loud and prolonged neigh echoed so shrilly around them, that the warden jumped aside, to the imminent danger of the treasure he carried. "By the saints," he exclaimed, apologetically, "I did not think all the horses left in the city could have produced such a noise. It sounds hopeful, however; and I hail it as a good sign. Here, friend Zdenko, put this flask with what else you have provided for your lord's need."

Albert attempted to mount his mysterious charger. But Eblis, hitherto quiet enough, seemed to have been reserving himself for the best opportunity of vindicating his name and character; for no sooner had the left hand of a stranger touched his mane than he presented the most positive objections to a familiarity unauthorized by the voice of his mistress, and was scarce less rampant in manners and measures than when first subdued by his forgotten conqueror.

"For the love of heaven, my lord," exclaimed the warden, "let the beast go: he is possessed by a demon."

Annoyed as he himself was with a vague superstition concerning the animal, Albert was as little inclined to yield to a devil, in persistence, as to any other power. So, while two iron-clad soldiers clung to his head, and the serf strove by his familiar voice to quiet the refractory steed, the young baron, by the exertion of all his extraordinary strength and elasticity, threw himself into the saddle and fixed his feet firmly in the

stirrups. The gates had been already opened to their full width. "Now!" said the adventurous rider, as he felt himself firmly seated. The men fell off, and, with two or three desperate plunges, Eblis gave a bound into the free space before him, rushed away like an arrow, and was as soon lost to view.

Albert would gladly have reserved his horse's power for the time of need; but the agitation he had undergone rendered him at first incapable of any thing but keeping his saddle mechanically. The superstitious associations which clung around the coal-black Eblis created in his mind a confusion highly favorable to the independent action of the steed, which pushed on in a due southerly direction for some moments. Then, however, the swift rushing of the air around him, the accustomed and animating motion which carried him on, restored to the rider his volition. He began to feel the bit after a fashion which created no little surprise in the mind of the self-important quadruped, used only to the light hand of his mistress, whom he had obeyed, as he fondly imagined, quite of his own free will and affection; and, before he could decide on the course to be pursued, he found his head turned to the northwest, and his run reduced to a walk. Now fully self-possessed, the young baron observed that Zdenko's caution had muffled the horse's hoofs, so that no sound might betray him. He murmured a prayer for his faithful kinsman's safety, and then bent his thoughts to the present exigency. The moon had not yet risen; and, thus favored, he considered it possible to glide unseen by the first outpost. But there was yet another point, which could not be evaded. He heard the clang of iron as the men repaired the dints their own or their masters' armor had received during the day,—saw the lights gleaming through the canvas of the tents, and the dark shadow of the sentinel gliding to and fro on the white surface. Yet he passed by unchallenged and unsuspected, and the lights faded in the

distance, and the music of hammer and anvil died away on the light breeze; and he felt strangely alone, fully conscious for the first time in his life of self-reliance. His pulse beat something too rapidly as he thought of all that hung on his own skill and strength, on his steed's fleetness and endurance or even tractability; and, with the natural exaggeration of youthful fancy, he felt that eternal glory or everlasting disgrace awaited the result of his enterprise. He caressed the proud and arching neck which swayed so gently and gracefully beneath his hand, to flatter its owner into familiarity and obedience, while his eyes glanced searchingly from side to side in watch for a lurking foe. He was near the first outpost. All was darkness and silence here; but he had such an idea of its position as to guide him in making a considerable turn, enough to give him some vantage for escape should he be discovered. But either the guard were drowsy, or supposed it absurd to apprehend any attempt at escape from the city; for again he passed unseen. Even while he thanked God for this second escape, which seemed to him almost miraculous, there mingled with the aspiration a feeling of some supernatural agency, lower, yet more immediate. And now the sternness of desperation gave place to the buoyant energy of hope. Bright visions of a future peopled the solitary glooms around, and gilded the mountain-defiles he was about to enter—a future of honorable success, of the glory so dear to youthful genius, and all twined into a garland of immortal joy by the bonds of that ineffable love from which he was snatched just as he was beginning to comprehend it. But he must linger few moments in this dream-land: a threatening reality is still before him. Through a grove on his left hand a faint, wavering gleam shows where the watch-fire of the enemy burns, and, too soon, the moon has raised her full, flushed brow above the horizon. Now every unseen step towards the light is worth an emperor's ransom; now

to get on a line with the foe before discovery : then, Eblis, each stroke of thy hoofs becomes as the pulse of fate. The last tree which screens the rider and his steed is reached ; the sentinel has just wheeled in his round, his back is towards them. Now, Eblis, for freedom, life, and love ! With these thoughts, Albert shook the bridle over the neck of his steed, and touched his sides lightly with the stirrup : one bound brings them from their covert ; another, and they are gliding away like shadows. But the sentry has turned : they are descried, and in an instant three troopers are in the saddle and clattering furiously in pursuit.

But, while the heavy war-horses, with their heavily-clad riders, are soon put to their utmost mettle, Eblis skims along lightly as if bearing his young mistress on a May-day frolic. By the moonlight, Albert discerns his pursuers distinctly. Without urging his horse, he cautiously keeps the same distance between them and himself : he sees one and then another lag behind : the contest will not be unequal should he be overtaken ; but of that he has no fears. Suddenly, however, the moon becomes obscured, and it is with difficulty he traces the beaten track. At last two paths present themselves ; and, deciding from the general direction of his journey, the young Rabenstein chooses the one on his right. But when his pursuers reach the same turn their loud shouts of derision reach him : he understands that he has committed some fatal error ; but, far from faltering, he presses the stirrups against the flanks of his good horse, to learn the more speedily what new perils beset him. Eblis abandoned his long, steady gallop for a run : the Bohemian blood was like to be well tested both in horse and horseman ; but suddenly, as the latter is deciding that he is beyond danger from the rear, Eblis halted with a recoil that had thrown a less experienced rider. But the clouds just then passed off from the moon, and Albert saw before him a chasm, which Eblis's better instincts had at

once discovered. He looked around; but rocks and heavy woods were on each side. He measured the ravine with a practised eye: it was a desperate venture; yet, with death behind, and love and liberty before, how much may be dared and done! He thought that once in his life, for mere boyish excitement, he had achieved as much, and felt satisfied that Eblis could do all that might be done by horseflesh. The sound behind him betrayed that but one of his foes was at all near him: he turned his horse's head from the chasm, and, putting lance in rest, spurred back to meet the advancing trooper, whom the delay had brought into unexpected contiguity. Down thundered the mail-clad rider and his heavy steed with a force that was of itself sufficient to have crushed his young opponent; but, obedient to the bit, Eblis wheeled like a swallow, and, ere the German could prepare again for the assault, his horse and himself rolled together in the rocky path. Albert listened. A distant sound of approaching hoofs reached him: he caressed and spoke cheerfully to the good steed he found so trusty beyond his hopes, and gave him a few moments' breathing ere he loosed him on his perilous leap. Nearer and nearer came the pursuit: the shouts of the riders echoed through the rocks. Still calmly the young soldier reined up his horse, measured with a keen glance the distance to the edge of the gulf, and dashed boldly forward. With every nerve strained to his task, the generous animal sprung forth firmly and fearlessly. There was an instant of breathless suspense, and the rider felt his horse's hoofs seize surely on the solid earth. The momentous agony was over; and, with a thrill of gratitude, he turned to look at the danger he had passed, and then sprang from the saddle to relieve the brave Eblis, who shook in every joint, as if suffering both from the leap and a consciousness of its peril. Leading him out of sight, Albert took from Zdenko's provisions a slice of black bread, which he soaked with the warden's good wine and presented

to Eblis as an acknowledgment of his services, and then turned to observe the approach of his pursuers. He saw them arrive at the point where their comrade lay senseless and perhaps slain, give one look at the yawning depth before them, and, lifting the fallen man, raise him between them over his horse and retreat. For some ten minutes the young baron permitted Eblis to repose himself, and then, remounting, resumed the route to Ulm by the guiding light of the polar star.


Father Cyrillus did not return so speedily as he had intended to the charge of his strange patient, partly because he could not soon leave the poor sufferers of Rabenstein, who clung to him for the healing of soul and body, and partly because a thought had taken possession of him, which he at once set his active brain to shaping into a plan deep and cruel,—the more cruel that, during the very time which he spent in framing it, it became profitless; for, although the young Baron of Rabenstein might, like other men, forget and forsake an old love for a new, yet the solemn and irrevocable vows once made, which bound him to protect and support the bravely loving and confiding, though mysterious bride, the very sense of chivalric piety and honor implanted by the tutor himself was enough to insure that he would seek her and suffer with her in the very jaws of the Inquisition. He had terrible wrongs to avenge, this born thrall of Rabenstein, this ardent reforming monk, and, in his blind pursuit of that revenge, saw not that he was about to inflict, on the youth whose life he would have died to save, sufferings almost as intolerable as his own,—sufferings to make that life as great a torture as his own had been.

The words of the vicar-general, uttered in the subterranean retreat of the convent, "We must have the page," were the text of the monk's device; for to his view this page was no longer a spoiled yet pleasing boy, nor yet a lovely and dependent woman, but a being exercising malignant and supernatural

power, if not altogether supernatural and evil. He could take no counsel of common sense or common feeling, for such counsel could not promote his wishes. Therefore he hastened at once to his Superior, and told him a simple tale of a boy swarthy as an Arabian, of whose home and parentage nothing could be learned, who had insinuated himself into the personal service of his pupil, the young Baron of Rabenstein; who had been wounded during the day, and whom he had found, when called on to attend him, transformed into a woman fair and beautiful, and dangerous as a water-sprite! He believed her to be at least a magician, bent on destroying the soul of his pupil. The Superior listened gravely to the discourse, asked if it were Father Cyrillus's opinion that the page should be taken into the charge of the Church, and in an hour all was decided and only waited opportunity to be effected. Thus it was that the monk was absent long enough to permit the evil which he was wasting time in his endeavors to avert.

Ludmila, meanwhile, lay in what seemed to her a sort of trance, her mind too much excited to yield entirely to the opiates she had taken, which were yet powerful enough to lull her senses into that dreamy state wherein the imagination weaves around the actual facts of existence a very fairy-land, where every wish becomes an entrancing reality. All the dreary anguish of parting had passed away. Albert was successful, great, and honored: she knelt with him before the Empress, was received with him into her father's arms, and the future was but one unbroken vista of love and fame. Occasionally she opened her eyes to see Zdenko watching patiently over her, to receive some draughts from him, to moisten her parched lips, and then relapsed into her charmed visions. It was late when Father Cyrillus reappeared. He considered carefully the effects of what he had previously given her, administered another portion of the com-

posing draught: then, telling the serf that his two wounded companions could not live till morning, and desired to see him if possible, he departed. The Bohemian sat by his lady until near midnight. She slept profoundly at last, and he began to think of his dying friends, waiting in agony to look once more upon a brother's face and charge him with all that they would say to the loving parent, wife, or child whom they had left for the sake of earthly freedom. In a short half-hour he could bestow this comfort upon them, and return. After some little debate with himself, he overcame the tremors he felt at leaving his mistress even for that time. She was so kind that, were she awake, she would surely bid him go. So he departed, fastening the door cautiously without to secure her against any chance of intrusion,—though who beneath that friendly roof would enter there but for kind inquiry? But there were other watchers nigh, besides the unfortunate serf. There were other eyes, more familiar than his own with the abandoned apartments and secret panels. No sound penetrated the senses of the fated sleeper, when three black-robed figures —“dogs of the Lord,” who bark not, but never fail to pull down their game when once set on its track—entered noiselessly. They paused a minute over the lowly and unprotected couch of the heiress of Riesenbergh; but there was no danger of awakening her, for the last draught had been well proportioned. Slowly and steadily, cautious of the wound she bore, they placed her on a light pallet. All was done with care and tenderness, for the falcon eyes of the vicar-general watched and directed every movement. He bears the torch which lights them as they move away; and still Zdenko comes not; still the slender limbs of Eblis are bearing Albert of Rabenstein from the spot where his sole earthly treasure is garnered; and still, while the spoiler moves away unchecked, the young hero's heart is swelling with a lover's dreams of the future, for there broods the golden-haired Hope, in the likeness of his



bride. And Ludmila! Ludmila, who sank into slumber beneath the same trust of happiness, with her whole soul full of the light of those dark, lustrous eyes heavy with a love beyond words, passes unconsciously, from the safety in which her lord had left her, into the very jaws of the human tigers who may rend each other to secure the prey, but who will never loosen their clutch. Alas for those who hope!

Father Cyrillus continued to sit by the dying serfs after Zdenko had departed. If any compunctions visited his mind with the image of the tender and helpless sufferer he had betrayed, any misgivings that he might have been too harsh or hasty, he stifled them by recalling all the mysteries he had observed, and coloring them with the darkest dyes of the superstition which had made them alarming. He sat awaiting the return of his humble friend; nor was it long before the latter rushed in with an air of utter helplessness and distraction, and, throwing himself at the monk's feet, asked with clasped hands and eyes strained with agony, the question to which he dared not give words.

"Did I not tell you it was the work of sorcery?" he replied, after the wretched serf had gathered strength to say that Ulric was nowhere to be found. But Zdenko did not heed him: he thought of his sister's child, who had trusted him with his very heart; of the young girl, so brave, so lovely and loving, and of all the terrible consequences of her strange disappearance, the result of his own neglect; and, falling prostrate, he grovelled on the floor, like one in the agonies of death, groaning in anguish unutterable.

* * * * *

Ludmila awoke with all the heaviness, pain, and confusion consequent on the soporific potions she had swallowed. She called feebly on Zdenko, and, receiving no answer, raised her head to look around for him; but her eyes felt like red-hot balls rolling in the sockets, and she fell back with a death-like

sickness. Some one raised her head slightly and placed a cooling draught to her parched lips, which she swallowed eagerly and sank again into slumber.

When at last she recovered enough from her stupor to look around, she observed the change with surprise, but not with immediate alarm. Perhaps she was still in the house of the warden: the apartment was small, but every thing in it rich, tasteful, and luxurious. Of the time which had elapsed since her last waking memories she could not judge. There was a candle burning near her; but this might be the same night on which she had parted with Albert, or the earth might have taken another stride in its mystic race with the future. No windows were discernible, for the walls were entirely covered by costly hangings. Her wound hindered her from rising: she began to feel as if she were spell-bound; a fear began to creep over her, inexplicable at first,—a sort of anxiety and painful sense of her helplessness, growing stronger as her recollections return and she can concentrate them, and finally overpowering her utterly, as the certainty to which her thoughts tend breaks on her. She is in the power of the General of the Dominicans and Henry of Lichtenstein. She became cold as ice; a violent nervous agitation shook her whole frame, increasing the pain of her wound so much that the mingled agony of mind and body found utterance in a convulsive cry. Immediately a portion of the hangings were raised, an old woman approached the sufferer's side, and, on seeing her condition, hurried away without a word. Almost hoping that she might die, Ludmila had not strength to care who it was that next entered. She recognised, however, an old and reverend-looking monk, whom she had seen about the town administering to the sick and wounded, and took readily the medicines he gave. He sat by her until the paroxysm had subsided, and then, calling the woman to his aid, proceeded to dress the deep and painful gash which

must always disfigure the beautiful shoulder on which it fell, and perhaps render it useless. In all this time the patient asked no question, uttered no sound: only, when she was left alone, and had reposed a little from all she had endured, she carried her hand to her side, and found, to her infinite relief, that the knife which had kept her courageous through her previous wanderings was still there.

Meantime, the struggle between the citizens and the Imperialists continued with unrelenting perseverance. Zdenko now exposed himself like a madman, hoping to fall, before the kinsman, whom he could not quite cease to regard as a master, should return to reproach him; and, again, used almost the caution of a coward to save his life, for the purpose of recovering his lost mistress. Father Cyrillus grew more and more gloomy from memories of the past, cares for the present, and forebodings for the future. Only his constant activity as physician for the souls and bodies of the suffering soldiery saved him from utter despondency. Had the time come, he asked himself, when he could serve the cause of freedom better by joining its ranks avowedly? The ultimate consequences of a confession of heresy were clear enough; and, as even the Savior of the world prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" Father Cyrillus may be excused if he also became exceeding sorrowful as he contemplated not merely revilings and denunciations, but the loathsome dungeons of the Rath-House of Nuremberg, its silent, secret windings, its torture-chambers, and its abyss wherein sank the mangled victims of political craft or theological pride, unseen, unknown, save by the eye of Heaven. In every moment of self-communing, with prayers and tears and prostration of soul, did he ask for the faith which alone could make his sacrifice useful to man and acceptable to God, until he felt that he had been heard with compassion, and strengthened to

go forth as one armed by the Lord of Hosts against all evil which the hand of man could inflict.

With the resolve of action came the opportunity. On the second morning of Albert's absence, the monk was sought by the warden, all excitement.

"In the name of Heaven," he exhorted him, "come to your wild Bohemians. They are clamoring for their young lord, and refuse to put hand to weapon until they have seen him. They won't listen to Zdenko, who seems to have lost his senses; and, if you cannot satisfy them, we shall have a mutiny,—just what some of my own rebels want; and then good-by to Beuren and to our heads."

Father Cyrillus hurried to the ramparts, where he found the men of Rabenstein drawn up, solid and sullen, while Zdenko sat on the ground apart, looking crushed and hopeless. Surveying them with an untroubled eye, the Dominican asked, in the Czech tongue, "How is this, my children, that I find you mutinous? You, so chosen and so trusted!"

There was a moment's embarrassed silence. Then several at once exclaimed, "Our young master——"

"If it is your young master's pleasure to absent himself from you for a while, you still know the duties he requires of you."

"But it is not like him to desert us at such a pass. Besides, his horse is in the stable, and the boy, who was like his shadow, is also missing," urged one of the serfs.

"And has not the town been raised in search of the page?" evaded the monk, a guilty flush rising to his face.

"Yes, reverend father; but we feared you might be looking for both as well; and these wretched traitors who desire to give up all we have fought for,—would they not betray our lord, who has been the life of this war? And here is Zdenko, first fighting like a madman and then moping like an idiot. If there is any thing wrong, why should it be hidden from us,

who would give our lives for Baron Albert? And so, though we beg your pardon, good father, we want no freedom without him, and we will not strike another blow blindfold."

"My children," responded Father Cyrillus, with a happy blending of tenderness and energy, "have you ever known me to fail in faith to you either of word or deed?"

"Never! never!" the Bohemians exclaimed, as with one voice.

"Then, when I assure you that I believe Baron Albert as safe as wit and courage can keep any man, and working for the good of all, can you doubt my sincerity?"

"No! no!" they again shouted.

"Remember, then, that he expects you to do your duty as faithfully as if his eye were upon you."

"Give us a leader of our own first!"

"A leader of your own? Take me!"

There was a visible start through the ranks, an exchange of surprised glances, and next a wild shout, such as might have welcomed back him for whose safety they were so jealous. Then, with thanks and broken entreaties for pardon, they gathered around their spiritual guide, while some of the more considerate hastened to bring armor and weapons. Like his pupil, he would accept only such as the serfs wore; and, throwing aside the mantle and cowl with which he was endued, his identity seemed transformed with his dress. A fierce light glowed in his eyes; his muscles exhibited a tension, his attitudes a power, which had hitherto slumbered beneath the robe of his order. Girding on sword and dagger, he seized a cross-bow, tried the cord, pronounced it frayed, and demanded another, just as the warden returned, he having wisely left the monk alone to deal with his refractory flock.

"In good time!" he exclaimed, after an amazed stare had satisfied him of the new order. "Yonder dogs mean to attack

the barbican of the western tower, thinking it weakened by their last assault."

"They shall be as well received," answered Father Cyrillus, "although we have no more beer for them. But first, my children, kneel, and chant the Psalm, 'Why do the heathen rage?'"

The serfs obeyed, and from nigh two hundred voices the solemn notes rose and swelled on the air in a majesty of music, which first startled and then awed the approaching foe. As with one impulse, the men bent their heads reverently and paused until their leader shouted, furiously, "On, knaves, on! Do ye stay for the hypocritical howling of a band of heretics and traitors?"

They resumed their march, and still the pious strain continued, rich and unbroken to the end; but, ere the enemy were formed before the gate, the Bohemians were ready for orders. Meantime, the warden had procured a reinforcement of cross-bowmen with their pavissers, and a small gun. A visible agitation ran through the hostile ranks at sight of the log banded with iron, which represented to their minds not merely the physical mischiefs it might work, but also the superstitious terrors of fiendish agency. Again their leader turned sharply and pointed to the man who stood, match in hand, over the dreaded engine; but at the moment it gave forth a bright flash, a sullen roar, and the stone had flown on its errand of death. A volley of stones and arrows took partial vengeance, and the knight brought his men to the assault with scaling-ladders and engines for battering at the gates, under cover of the huge shields meant to ward off the missiles from above. At this moment the Dominican, with his archers, approached. One look at the foremost banner among the assailants, a flashing glance at the leader, and the monk grew pale, and murmured to himself, "It is God's time!"

With a brief explanation to the warden, and a command to

the serfs to follow, Father Cyrillus rushed through the tower into the street below, and, his face beaming with a light akin to that of an avenging angel, vehemently called on the artisans, some of whom were lounging listlessly around, others plying their trades as a temporary refuge from their fears.

"Men of Beuren," he exclaimed, "cease wasting your strength on wood and iron! Fight manlike for one day against the tyranny of Church and State, against the ambition and craft of the Emperor, against the violence and greed of Eberhard the Riotous, and be ever after free!"

They stared wonderingly at him, and, as the whisper spread, "It is Father Cyrillus!" the wonder increased.

"And if the Emperor and Count Eberhard prove too strong for us?" suggested one of the disaffected. "Your robe protects you, and we take the punishment."

"If they prove too strong for us, my robe betrays me to torture and death; if we conquer, what have I still but my cross and robe, with the blessed thought that I have helped to plant freedom on German soil! while to you remains the birthright of God's children, to eat in peace that which you earn by honest toil, to be protected from the hard hand of unrighteous power by the laws yourselves may make, and to call none your master save Christ."

"Freedom or death!" shouted the serfs, as he paused. The zealous cry of these, whose story was well known, coming thus on the earnest words of the monk, stirred something like enthusiasm in the hearers.

"We may as well die fighting as die starving," a few of the better sort suggested.

"Better!" Father Cyrillus instantly responded; "for you will die in the discharge of a glorious duty, and will be ever remembered as martyrs, with prayers and tears of gratitude. Seize at once such arms as are nearest,—axe, mace, hammer;

strike as you strike for daily bread ; and God is with you and victory sure !”

“ Freedom or death !” again shouted the Bohemians, their cry now swelled by the voices of the continually gathering crowd ; and those shadows of craftsmen snatched literally the nearest weapons,—from axe and sword to club and flail. At the monk’s orders, the gates were opened, and the drawbridge lowered ; and his thoroughly excited followers rushed forth so violently and unexpectedly that the enemy’s foot-soldiers wavered and fell back before the onslaught. Their leader rallied them actively, and urged on his horsemen ; but the artisans maintained their ground by burying their knives in the chests of the horses, hamstringing or otherwise disabling them, and often fatally assaulting their riders as they struggled to free themselves from their plunging steeds. The serfs did fearful execution with their short axes, while Father Cyrillus fought his way to confront the Baron of Rabenstein.

“ Stay, tyrant, ravisher, murderer !” he shouted, seizing the knight’s bridle, and his voice, usually subdued and monotonous, rang out in its native power. Some tone in this strange defiance touched Zahera keenly, for, instead of resenting the insolent grasp of a serf on his rein, he gazed wildly into the face so suddenly upturned to his : the closed visor concealed whatever emotion might have marked his own, but he shuddered visibly. The next instant the glare of earthly rage in the eyes below him reassured him, and a struggle ensued, desperate as the passions of the combatants : despair and vengeance exchanged blows. Nerved by memories fiercer than death, the monk brought his antagonist’s horse to his haunches, vociferating, “ Yield, traitor to God and man !”

The baron flung himself from the saddle, and, while the axe yet hung above his head, he recognised, what before had seemed but a vision of his conscience, the features of his assailant. A fearful convulsion shook his powerful frame, and,

uttering in a hollow murmur the name of Conrad, he fell back at the feet of his foe, whose blow was still delayed. "Forgiveness is mine, said the Lord; and I will repay it!" exclaimed the monk, triumphantly; but even on the instant the Imperialist party in full array swept around him like a whirlwind, and a violent blow laid him senseless.

* * * * *

The General of the Dominicans was not wise to alarm his prey needlessly,—nor too wise to inform his accomplice of the success of their scheme so long as he could safely conceal it.

Ludmila, confident that Zdenko would never faint in his search for her, strove resolutely to keep down all terrors, and in prayers for Albert's safety, of whom every thought was a prayer, and in hopeful dreams for the future, to compose and fortify herself for whatever trial might yet await her. On the fourth day the old nurse announced the vicar-general. He spoke kindly of her health and its improvement, as reported by the brother who attended her; gradually approached the state of Beuren, and his impending surrender; thence, gliding with tact into her personal affairs, delicately assured her how keenly he had felt that to remove her from a situation so unsuited to her age and rank was an imperative duty, and scarcely more so to herself than to the Empress, who, in yielding to her generous impulse, could not foresee the occurrences which had withdrawn her from the domains of her father's friend, the Baron of Rabenstein, and the protection of the old minstrel.

Poor Ludmila writhed under this: it was so bitter to see all the life of love which she had woven into a romance of such pure and lofty poesy desecrated by worldly interpretation,—to be snatched from the fairy-land where she had created her home, and treated as a mere spoiled child pursuing a phantom despite all good advice,—and yet all said so courteously and kindly. Still, she listened in respectful

silence, until he reached the main purpose of his visit,—to inform her of her removal from Beuren that night. She expected this, yet the announcement sent a pang through her heart; but her native pride, and the fear of betraying something of all the counterplot which the vicar was so far from suspecting, aided her self-control: there was but a slight tremor in her voice as she replied,—

“Reverend father, I yield to your better judgment; but have the kindness not to deprive me of my senses again: the drugs you must have used made me so intolerably ill.”

The listener thought that the court-pet was not much changed, but found an exquisite charm in the little air, half pouting, half arch, which neither pain nor terror could quite subdue.

“You have my word, daughter, that your wish shall be observed, on your promise to keep silence.”

“Your word as a gentleman,—not as a monk and an Inquisitor?”

“My word as a gentleman;” and, bestowing his blessing on her, Father Ignatius withdrew, well satisfied with the docility of his captive.

Night fell on this fourth day, a chill, dark night; and towards the mid-hour, the young Baroness of Rabenstein, warmly clad by her nurse and blindfolded, felt herself carefully lifted, still on her pallet, by strong arms, was conscious of a descent, of a change of atmosphere, then of the outer air, and knew herself at the outlet where she had heard her doom pronounced. A cold horror ran through her veins at the recollection, when, as she was placed in a litter, her quick ear caught a dull, continuous sound, which to senses less acute seemed but the usual murmur of the forest. But to Ludmila it was the step of Albert hastening to fold her in his arms, while a strong and crafty foe was bearing her beyond his reach. She *started up*, and would have shrieked, “I am near: save

me!" but she was arrested by a touch, and a whisper, "Remember our conditions!" Her voice died in a convulsive gasp, and a fainting-fit relieved her present sufferings.

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The siege of Beuren was raised, and Eberhard the Riotous retreated for the third time before the growing power of civil and religious freedom. But, while the temporal lords were thus checked, the spiritual—so calling themselves—lost neither time nor opportunity in the strife to hold and gain power; and when they failed in that they rarely failed to secure revenge, by which they could silence where they could not controvert. Bull upon bull was issued by Gregory XI. against John de Wycliffe, far away in England, where even the weak and brainless John had roused himself to declare *that no Italian priest should tithe or toil in his dominions*,—where so lately the great Edward had, in his own authority first, and after by that of Parliament, repudiated utterly the right of any king to compromise his people by subjecting them to any foreign authority whatever. And as the Pope thus fulminated against a people so sound at heart, so sturdy in support of personal rights, we may well suppose that in Germany, whose ruler had pursued a long course of diplomacy to secure the alliance of Rome for the aggrandizement of his family, he spoke with no feeble voice and dealt out judgment with no stinting hand. But one vital point his Holiness could not compass; and neither the zeal, subtlety, nor authority of his active partisans the Dominicans had yet succeeded in establishing within the empire that scourge of heresy, that potent engine of unquestioning faith, the Inquisition. Unhappily, the want was not ill supplied by the corruptions of judicial administration,—above all, in that of Nuremberg, where a struggle between the patricians and the people, as in olden Rome, had ended in the successful tyranny of the former.

As the Governor of Suabia retreated from Beuren, so did

the Emperor withdraw from Ulm, and, uniting, they reached Nuremberg, bearing themselves triumphantly, as having achieved some great, though mysterious victory; while Ludmila, pale, weak, and exhausted by anxieties for which her romance could find no remedy, was restored to the Empress by the policy of the vicar-general of the Dominicans.

"Said I not well, mad girl, that thou wouldst play the damsel-errant? But, Heaven help us, here's a tangled web to wind!" exclaimed the tender Elizabeth, as her pet sat again at her feet and told her wanderings and her woes.

Here a page appeared at the door of the Empress's private bower, begging leave to say to the Lady of Riesenbergh that a serf, claiming to be her follower, was pleading piteously for admission: then a wild-eyed, emaciated figure pressed forward and fell on his knees, crying, "Pardon, gracious lady, pardon!"

At a sign from the Empress, the page vanished, and Ludmila gasped forth, "Thy master?"

"He left Beuren in search of you."

Ludmila burst into tears of thankfulness.

"Tell thy story quickly," interposed the Empress. And Zdenko began his relation, how, called by his dying friends from his lady's side, he had sped back, to find her place vacant: he described his own frenzy, the search made for her, Father Cyrillus's sally at the head of the serfs, his fall, and the return of Baron Albert that same night with reinforcements; how, with the warden, he had seized the Dominican convent and there captured a body of the enemy's troops admitted through a secret passage; how they had next ransacked every nook of the building for the missing "Ulric," and the final admission of the Prior that "they must inquire of the heretical and apostate Bohemian, Cyrillus." Stunned by this blow, Albert had withdrawn, silent and ghastly, like a man walking in his sleep, and the night fol-

lowing the retreat of the besiegers he and Eblis had disappeared. Divining his object, Zdenko, too, suddenly formed a plan of search; and after scrutinizing, like a gaze-hound, the ground about the secret entrance of the convent, he discovered, favored by the rain which had fallen on the night of his mistress's removal, certain footprints, which he decided on following. Aided by a few cautious queries, he had tracked the party, and had thus reached Nuremberg.

The poor serf's contrition, his grief, his evident sufferings, touched Ludmila's heart, and the Empress viewed him with a wondering compassion to find, in a sphere so abject, such intelligence and fidelity. He was consigned to the care of the trusty Carl, with injunctions to eat, drink, sleep, and recover his strength for future need.

The young countess's tears continued to flow as she thought of Albert searching for her among enemies, a captive, perhaps—his life forfeited as a rebel.

"But mounted on thy favorite Eblis—" her protectress interrupted her sobbing speech; "Eblis, the fleetest of his kind, sagacious enough to be accredited with a familiar. Eblis will bring thy lover as surely to Nuremberg as if he had received thy special orders. Dry thy tears, child. Remember, to-morrow sees Count Eberhard's grand festival in our honor, and at night our Imperial consort's banquet and ball to his gallant and loyal knights. If you appear with swollen lids and pale cheeks, the malicious will say, 'The court-pet has been deposed.'"

At an early hour the next day, princely banner and knightly pennon floated on many a grassy knoll without the city. Through many a grove used to no harsher sound than the cooing of the dove, the gay note of thrush and blackbird, or the wren's restless chirp, lounged the coarse man-at-arms or stirred himself in bear-like sport; while the clatter of *flagons*, the rude song of the camp, the hoarse laugh and

angry oath, sickened those who had been wont to revel there in the harmonies of nature. Horses' hoofs and riders' armed heels had torn the rich carpet of mossy turf, and many a stout monarch of the forest had veiled his wreathed crest before the intruders' need. On an isolated hillock stood a gorgeous pavilion framed in by stately oaks. There waved the banner of Wurtemberg, while above it floated the Imperial standard; for there the Emperor and his consort were to grace the sylvan festival of the Governor of Suabia. There halted the Imperial procession, escorted by Eberhard's most distinguished knights, himself conspicuous over all, not more by the greater splendor of the jewels gleaming in his steel half-armor, than by his natural advantages of person and chivalric training. The trumpets rang out a louder note of homage and welcome as he sprang from his horse to aid the Emperor to alight. Next he gracefully rendered the same service to the Empress; while his train were equally assiduous around the ladies of the court.

Cloth of gold and silver, tapestries wrought with many a fair scene of court, chase, and battle-field, decorated the pavilion. Flagon and beakers of gold and of silver, gleaming along the Imperial board, superbly illustrated the entertainer's wealth and the artistic skill of the age in the jewelled splendor of the utensils and the beauty of their design. Opposite the Imperial dais, the side of the tent was open, giving to view the grove trimmed into an arched canopy over long-continued tables.

Their Imperial Majesties seated, the count, kneeling, craved to officiate as taster; and, this grave ceremonial over, the feast proceeded, its noisy attributes drowned by the sound of musical instruments. The heavier portion of the meal discussed, Eberhard called for a minstrel, not unworthy, he said, to lift his voice in that lofty presence; and an old man was brought forward, whose elastic step, bright eye, and the

black hair, scarce changed by age, which flowed gracefully around his temples and throat, showed how Nature, when respected, aids her children to defy Time. Dropping on one knee before the platform, he struck his harp with true musical fervor, and began in Bohemian a lay in honor of Charles's glory, talents, and encouragement of learning and the arts in his native land. Next, in Polish, he described the charms and virtues of the Empress, with a graceful zeal deeper than mere courtly *devoir*, and concluded with a song in German in praise of the united excellencies and wedded happiness of the Imperial pair.

The Emperor thanked both host and bard in the polished style of the French Court, and threw a heavy chain of gold over the neck of the latter. The Empress dropped a costly ring in his hand, with a more precious glance of recognition.

"Art thou of Nuremberg, minstrel?" asked Charles, graciously.

"I am a Bohemian, great Kaiser, and in my youth was once so graced as to sing before Bohemia's best and bravest, thy royal father."

The Emperor started and crossed himself, murmuring a prayer for the repose of the dead, then, looking with interest on the minstrel, said,—

"Hast thou no chant in honor of one so truly the soul of chivalry, that, come what may in the annals of Germany,—ay, or of all Europe—no greater name for royal wisdom or manly daring shall ever be blazoned by song or chronicle? Drink, nobles all, to the memory of our glorious sire, to John of Bohemia!"

All rose reverently, and the pledge was drank in solemn silence.

Then the minstrel struck a few mournful, yet bold and inspiring chords, and sang the story of the bloody day of Crécy, and of the grand old sightless monarch led into the

very face of a victorious foe, that he might strike one blow with his own sword for honor.

The Emperor's dark face was red and white alternately during the lay. Strong as he was in self-control, he bit his lip, and his chin quivered; for he had done a knight's *devoir* at Crécy, and saw again through the words, endured again in the impassioned chant, the varying scenes, the exhausting emotions, of that day, when he had felt that *all was lost, save honor!*

About the dais pressed gray-haired nobles, who had shared in the struggle, and suffered, yet gloried, in the glorious fall of their king. Stalwart soldiers were they, but children in their loyalty, and their tears paid tribute to the power of song *infandum renovare dolorem*. Each one recalled the heroic sovereign,—*multa viri virtus animo, multusque recursat gentis honor*,—and the last chords which rang out to his deathless fame were mingled with an impulsive cheer from the enthusiastic Bohemians, instinctively swelled by the other guests, and echoed without, as the occasion spread, until the whole encampment was stirred to a mighty shout, such as only martial ardor can inspire and utter.

Deeply moved, the Emperor said, "Present thyself at the castle to-morrow, minstrel: our chamberlain will receive thee."

Lords and ladies pressed chains, rings, and bracelets on the favored bard, as, with a flushed cheek and grateful smile, he withdrew to receive new acclamations without.

The hangings at one end of the tent were then raised, discovering an apartment for dancing, opening upon a long avenue in the grove, to afford the sovereigns a brilliant and ever-changing picture of the throng. Eberhard escorted the Imperial party to the distinguished position arranged for them, and then craved her Highness's permission to lead the fair Anna to the dance. It was a cold and trembling hand

he received: so he drew her forth into the air, beneath the glittering foliage of a grandly-spreading beech, where he stood silent some moments, admiring her beauty heightened by the rich green leaves garlanding her brown hair and trembling around her white and stately throat.

"Look at me, Anna," he said, gently; and she lifted her glance as before, to meet those dangerous eyes, which, often as they flashed with unruly passions, could soften to such thrilling tenderness. The blood flitted to and from her soft cheeks, as she looked, timid, uncertain, held as the snake holds the doomed bird. "Am I so terrible?" continued the count again, purposely repeating the words of their first interview. Anna blushed crimson, conscious of a far different thought; for Eberhard, the very type of the accepted hero of the age, scarce changed since their first meeting, (save that the fair hair was somewhat mixed with white, the result equally of severe labor in council and in field and of coarse indulgence in his hours of ease,) with the same subtle impress of power over his aspect and bearing, was one on whom few women could look with indifference. There was a singular harmony in the pair,—in their physical resemblance and the contrast of their moral expression. As they stood canopied by the same beautiful boughs, and resplendent in attire as in health and beauty, they formed a living idyl, the mortal knight wooing the hamadryad of the tree. "Am I so terrible?" he repeated; "and, were I a very goblin, my constancy might plead for me with one as gentle as lovely. Why do you shrink from me?"

Ludmila would have replied, "Because by you I lost my father and my home; because you are justly called Eberhard the Riotous!" But Ludmila had been excused by the Empress's care for her health, unluckily for Anna, whose yielding nature could never have greater need of her friend's strength.

The count, however, felt the unspoken accusation, and was

about to defend himself against his partner's embarrassed silence, when an esquire approached, bearing the request of a stranger for an audience.

"This day is devoted to their Imperial Majesties—" Here the stranger came forward, apologizing with grave courtesy for his intrusion on matters that admitted no delay; and, with a haughty surprise, deepening into curiosity, Count Eberhard looked at the speaker, whose dress was that of a common soldier, and further stamped with inferiority by a serf's collar around his throat, but whose manner was that of a noble, whose young face was ghastly pale and full of a stern agony.

"Among your prisoners, noble sir, there is a Dominican monk, called Cyrillus," the young man continued, rapidly. "I come to entreat speech with him from your knightly courtesies."

"He is under the ban of both Church and State. Who are you, that ask such a favor?"

"I am Albert, a serf."

Anna recognised Ludmila's portrait, and the count felt her hand start in his. "You are then Albert of Rabenstein," he rejoined, "arrayed against your Emperor and your country by this seditious monk."

"My lord, I have told you all I am. I have left Beuren, where you know whether I was safe, and have placed myself in your power solely for an interview with Father Cyrillus. Can I have it?"

"Let me hope that your final intent is to return to your father and your rank."

"My sole intent is to see Father Cyrillus; and I am in your power."

The count had that careless good nature miscalled generosity; and he wished to appear generous in Anna's eyes.

"I would gladly pleasure so noble a foe: it will therefore be wise in you to retire ere your presence here be known, and come to me to-morrow privately."

The warning was too late. The esquire Rupert, scarce more discreet than when he pursued Sir Adolph of Weinsperg from Esslingen, had whispered that the soldier in converse with his master was the young Baron of Rabenstein, whose madness in throwing away worldly honors to fight for the free cities with his serfs, had been the theme of many a camp-fire chat. The whisper reached the vassals of Rabenstein, with the addition that the young rebel was a prisoner, and would suffer death for treason. Their zealous love swept away not merely their military discipline, but their stronger awe of rank and power, and they speedily surrounded their young lord with a band formidable in devotion, if not in numbers. Some of the elder ones seized his hands; others fell on their knees, loudly expressing their joy to recover him: all were clamorous for his freedom.

The count's immediate followers, seeing these extraordinary demonstrations, imagined him in danger, and rushed to throw themselves on the supposed mutineers.

"Back, my men! back!" Eberhard promptly shouted, while Albert restrained his friends by voice and gesture. Anna clung to the count's hand, as if to the only safeguard between herself and death: he gave her an assuring smile, and found in her tremor an excuse for throwing a sustaining arm around her. In the midst of the turmoil, the Baron of Rabenstein appeared, leaning on an attendant, his step rendered firm only by indomitable pride.

"Why do you suffer this insolence, my lord governor?" he exclaimed, in a harsh and broken voice. "Cut down those knaves; and for that chief rebel, let the hangman deal with him!"

"There is no need of violence," Eberhard replied; "and as for this young gentleman, he has surrendered to me, and must receive fair treatment."

"He is my serf! Can he surrender to you what he does not

own,—himself?" As the count did not at once assent, Zahera continued, bitterly, "I may conclude, then, that if my horse, which is much more valuable, had strayed into your power, you would have claimed him also!"

Eberhard's bright blue eyes flashed with rage, and his sword gleamed in the air. Albert sprang forward, and again the excitement spread as before among the followers of both. The baron pushed his son aside.

"Strike at your leisure, my lord," he said: "I am in no state to cross swords with you."

"I strike no man at odds; and you, baron, are my guest," the count replied, though the angry flush was slow to fade from his face. As his blade fell, the vicar-general joined the agitated group, which he scanned as critically as if each figure were marble. He regarded Eberhard with a sneer, which he did not quite succeed in concealing when their eyes met: it did not increase the count's placability, but he continued to address the baron.

"If your son is not my prisoner, he is that of the state."

"I will appeal to the Emperor."

"It will be useless," interrupted the General of the Dominicans. "Albert of Rabenstein is accused not merely of rebellion, but of heresy and witchcraft."

This sudden announcement, and by such authority, shocked Zahera more than he could easily conceal. To see his son in the power of a body which, though thwarted by the spirit of the people in its attempts to introduce the holy office publicly into Germany, was believed to exercise the inquisitorial functions upon occasion, was an extreme he had not contemplated.

"I appeal to the Emperor!" he repeated, emphatically.

"At your pleasure; but the interests of religion are paramount."

The Dominican was a wise man. Charles, who had temporized with, and finally failed to gratify, the Pope's enthusiasm

for a crusade against the infidels of Palestine, could afford to signalize his fidelity to the Church by abandoning to its tender mercies the heretics of his own land,—a trifling concession, since it involved no sacrifice of armies and of treasure, no risk of political discussion and civil discord. Charles also was a wise man.

The Governor raged secretly against his indomitable guests, both arrayed against his power and influence; but there was no resource. So he said, "We will go to his Highness. My prisoner"—with a slight stress on the pronoun—"will follow me, I trust."

Albert assented with a graceful dignity, as if invited to the festivities; but a discontented murmur arose among the humble friends around him. He turned to them with a smile.

"Thanks, brothers, for your love," he said; "but I came here freely: I shall withdraw safely, if it be God's will. Get back to your quarters, that my enemies—if I have any—may not brand you as rioters, and myself as a reckless rebel."

Not one of the vassals of Rabenstein had been recreant enough to shrink before their lord's wrath; but to his son, degraded to their own rank, they rendered unhesitating love and obedience.

"We have carried you in our arms," exclaimed some of them: "we have protected you when you were too small to protect yourself. Do not forget us!" and they marched away, though not without many a longing glance cast backward.

The count, meantime, turned to Anna, who still stood by his side as pale and as motionless as marble. He whispered an apology for his anger and a compliment on her conduct, with an eloquence the more dangerous because sincere, though exerted for a false purpose, and then led the way to the pavilion of state, the others following, each according to his mood, and apart, as were their motives.

"Oh, my lord, you will save him?" Anna ventured to whisper.

"I would attempt harder things for your sake; but I must be bribed—" Anna looked up with a childlike smile at the jest—"bribed with such smiles, bribed by your kind thoughts when you hear me defamed."

"Be bribed by Ludmila's and my own eternal gratitude," she added, gathering courage from friendship.

"For your gratitude I would risk the Emperor's favor and brave the vicar-general; but for yours only!" Eberhard replied, in a low, passionate tone, and with a look and smile beneath which Anna's pleading eyes dropped, she knew not why. Restoring her then with courtly ceremony to her place by the Empress, he sank on one knee before the Emperor; and entreated that his Highness would condescend to hear and decide a dispute which had arisen between himself and the noble Baron of Rabenstein. Charles courteously assented, as the other parties presented themselves; and the count redeemed his word to Albert and to Anna by the manner in which he described the scene just enacted, and the conflicting claims on the prisoner. He could be generous to one who had not personally aroused his anger and warped his judgment; and his strong, unruly nature sympathized with the strength in which the heir of Rabenstein had set at defiance all the power and hope of his birth. The Empress listened with deep anxiety for Ludmila's sake; Anna, with awe, although trusting so much to the speaker's influence; Henry of Lichtenstein, like one who, having staked his soul on a cast with the great Enemy, was watching the throw with an agony second only to that of defeat. The vicar-general and the prisoner rivalled each other in composure; the first, secure in the Emperor's decision; the last, unconscious of the machinations around him, and absorbed by the one object which had drawn him into the snare. As for the stern father, it was even difficult

for the women to pity his disappointment and desolation, while the son stood there, handsome, stately, and brave, the man less obscured by his coarse dress, than by the rich attire of the young gallants of the court, who looked with contempt on the serf self-exiled from the magic circle of hereditary power. Some there were present, understanding the subject apart from its present personalities, who looked on Father Matthias Janow, the Emperor's confessor, with more interest than on the prisoner, as with a countenance of saint-like patience the good priest awaited his own fate in that of Albert, and the fate of Christian liberty in Germany.

When the Count of Wurtemberg ceased speaking, there was a painful pause, which neither of the other parties seemed desirous to break. The vicar-general was easy as to the result; the baron disdained to plead for justice.

"Lord Governor, and you, my Lord of Rabenstein," the Emperor at last replied, "it were bootless for us to decide between your claims to the prisoner, inasmuch as the charges of the reverend General of the Dominicans admit of no negligence, of no false leniency. As a youth drawn by artful advisers into rebellion against our own authority, we might pardon him, or resign him to one of you for better instruction and guidance. But heresy and witchcraft, aiming at the destruction of our holy religion, endanger the very foundations, by loosing all bonds of duty from man to God and to his fellows, to the eternal ruin of him who practises them and of those whom he may corrupt. As the temporal guardian, albeit most unworthy,"—here Charles crossed himself earnestly,—“of the Holy Roman Empire, it more becomes us to guard the Church from insult, and the souls for which it labors from danger, than to guard the integrity of the crown we wear and the possessions it represents. This youth of Rabenstein therefore remains the prisoner of the state, under

the charge of the reverend Vicar-General, until such time as we can bestow due attention to his trial."

A contortion passed over the Baron's face: for a moment he seemed likely to forget the master in the father; but his fierce pride conquered, and he was about to address his liege-lord with a passion which would probably have consigned himself also to a dungeon, when suddenly the old harper urged his way and threw himself at the foot of the throne, exclaiming, "Pardon, great Emperor, pardon, and, for his sake whose great name I essayed to sing, grant some mercy to my young lord."

Wily potentate as he was, Charles was yet annoyed by the subject before him, and by the mild eye of his confessor: the confusion created by Berethold's uncourtly interruption was therefore a relief, and graciously excused.

"Rise, old friend," was the reply: "if the youth be guiltless, he is safe. Were his offence against ourself alone, you should not plead in vain; but from the justice which the Church deems salutary for offenders it is neither in my power nor of my will to screen him." A wave of his hand dismissed the subject, and the parties to it.

"God have mercy upon us!" murmured Berethold. He turned towards the Empress; but, as a warning glance met his quick apprehension, he stood with trembling, clasped hands, his tear-dimmed eyes wandering vaguely over the princely assemblage expressing so much power and so little of pity, and it seemed to him like a court of fiends holding high festival.

"Oh, my master, my child!" he sobbed.

"Hush!" said Albert, soothingly: "have no fear. The small birds tremble before the storm-clouds; the eagle soars above them!"

He spoke in Bohemian; but some experienced courtiers saw a sudden flush on the Emperor's swarthy cheeks. "My

Lord of Wurtemberg," he said, abruptly, "you have clouded your festivities by this scene."

During these occurrences, Zdenko, wandering without the limits of the encampment, with a sad yearning in his heart to look on the men of Rabenstein, was startled by a low neigh, as familiar to his ear as the voice of her beloved to a woman. He turned to be almost upset by the affectionate energy of Eblis tied to a tree by a long hair rope. "Oh, my beauty, oh, my pet!" exclaimed the amazed serf, lavishing caresses as sincere as those he received, while he loosed the halter and rejoiced to see the black horse rush round him in short circles, lashing out in an insanity of delight.

"But our master, Eblis, where is he? Dead, or a prisoner among those enemies of truth and freedom? Ah, woe for me, and woe for the young and lovely! Let us go to her: at least she will rejoice to behold thee. But if he be lost to us forever! Ah, woe is me!"

As if touched by the mournful voice, Eblis laid his head on Zdenko's shoulder; but, condescending as were his manners, he objected decidedly to being led away.

"Now blessed be the saints!" exclaimed the serf; "for surely he lives. Thou art wiser than I, Eblis: what wilt thou tell me?" He walked towards the camp, and the horse followed him with alacrity, scenting the track like a slot-hound. Suddenly his guide retraced his steps; but the sagacious animal resisted, and, by whinnying softly, seemed to remonstrate. A second trial had the same result. "He is there, thou sayest: no stranger wouldst thou seek thus." Zdenko pondered, and, acting on the affinities between the stomach and the affections, held forth a lump of black bread. Let us not blame the weary and ill-fed animal that he behaved no better than humanity is wont to do, and followed the hand that offered food. After coaxing him thus to a clump of pines which offered a leafy screen that autumn had partially

removed from other trees, the serf wrapped the halter about his wrist, and seated himself, while Eblis regaled on the bread. The correctness of this decision was soon proved by the approach of voices talking loudly in German, of which the serf had learned something in Beuren.

"It must be hereabout that we should find that accursed horse," said one, roughly.

"Why do you call him accursed?"

"Why? Didn't I see him leap fifty feet one moonlight night?"

The first speaker gave a long whistle. "Fifty! You mean fifteen."

"Fifty, I tell you. Isn't the young lord a magician? Three of us chased him from an outpost a fortnight ago; and we might as well have chased the Wild Huntsman. We thought he had missed the road, and felt sure of him; but as soon as he saw us, he wheeled round, and just galloped over poor Fritz, who was ahead, and then turned again and sailed over the chasm as if the horse had wings. And that's the beast we're sent here to catch, because the prisoner doats on him."

"The devil! Your lord sets small value on Christian men."

"Eberhard the Riotous didn't earn his name by caring for any thing."

Here Zdenko in his hiding-place gave Eblis a signal, on which he bounded out almost over the intruders.

"God help us! Here he is!" shouted the vassal of Wurttemberg, as both men retreated to a safer distance, crossing themselves.

"We can catch him by the halter." But on the attempt the horse snorted indignantly, planted his forefeet, and extended his neck, a savage curl of the lip showing his teeth ominously, while his eyes glared a fiendish defiance.

"See here : I came to help you find a horse ; but this is a devil."

"It is what I was sent for, and what I must get."

"Catch your own devils, then."

At the word a fearful yell rang through their ears, a figure sprang from the covert to the horse's back, which, with a rapid whirl, threw out his heels so happily that his immediate antagonist fell prone, and the other threw himself on the ground in a paroxysm of terror.

Another yell, more horrible than the first, a loud neigh of triumph, and the two unfortunates were left to carry the story of their marvellous discomfiture to the encampment, producing thereby as marvellous an accession of piety.

* * * * *

There was high revelry that night in the old castle, and it was decided, on no less critical authority than the Emperor's, that the Countess of Riesenberghad discovered the old magician's book of enchantments ; for her blue eyes rivalled the opal in brilliancy and changefulness, her cheeks and lips glowed as with a new life, and never had her voice seemed so pure and penetrating as she sang the Bohemian legends in which the Emperor delighted. The gossips said that it was not indisposition, but coquetry, that had kept her from Count Eberhard's morning entertainment : they said it was through coquetry also that she would not touch the harp herself, but sang to the accompaniment of one of the court-minstrels. They did not observe how often her left hand was supported on her right arm ; nor could the most curious eyes discover the red scar beneath her rich mantle. Even on Henry of Lichtenstein she smiled so brightly that his selfish heart was touched with something more akin to love than usual : the Vicar-General watched her with eyes that gleamed like the serpent's whose prey is about to fall into its jaws. He accosted her, and her eyes flashed, but her color faded. "She

knows all!" he said mentally: "she will risk all to save him." In this thought he framed his manner and words with an insinuating blending of paternal kindness and court gallantry, which, after the first shock, she permitted him to suppose effective; but she was grateful when Prince Wenceslaus rescued her. While she floated like a fairy through the dance with him, Anna, to the envy of many a high-born damsel, swam like a swan by the side of the Count of Wurtemberg: such were the comparisons of the court-poets. For the first time thoroughly awake to courtly intrigue, she began to develop her quick wit and personal-graces in the hazardous game of mine and countermine. Hitherto the repate of the prince for coarse indulgences had led her to avoid him as much as possible, by confining herself to the strict etiquette of her position by the Empress; but this night, affecting interest in his conversation, she rather led than followed it; and, availing herself of what was partly known and partly guessed, she adroitly sounded his ambition, his politics, and his hopes. She gladly discovered a dislike of Eberhard, which he was too frank to dissemble.

"You are fond of that young girl," he said, looking at Anna. "You must watch the snake that is coiling around her."

"She is the eldest: she should guard me," was the evasive answer.

"You are the eldest by centuries of ancestry. You fill the sphere in which you are born: she is but transplanted; and we grow as giddy by looking up as by looking down. Moreover, she is wax; you are marble."

"But the Empress——"

"Is the Emperor's wife, fair Countess; and it jumps with my Imperial father's need to accept the fitful loyalty of Count Eberhard surnamed 'the Riotous'—riotous in politics, war, wine, and women—who must be called to council, honored,

and surely not contradicted in any of his tastes—it might blight his budding fealty—while here am I, riotous only at my own table, denounced in this pious circle, because, when the Pope urges a Crusade I laugh aloud, while the Emperor and the Count cross themselves devoutly, and laugh in their sleeves: because they assent to robbing and roasting Jews and heretics, while I consider them as useful and as honest as the most orthodox. I will have no such cookery in Bohemia: therefore such saints as the Vicar-General of the merciful order of St. Dominic look suspiciously on me.”

“But Bohemians will love you!” responded Ludmila, warmly, and in Bohemian. “I love Bohemia, for my mother’s sake.”

“Then I should have had a loyal subject in you.”

She blushed deeply.

“Your pardon,” continued the Prince; “but, knowing you betrothed to the young Rabenstein, I was thinking, although he was a bad vassal to my father, he might be an excellent one to me. But I would not wager one of your ringlets on the life of a heretic in the hands of the Inquisition.”

“My father will be very sorry——” So pale and rigid was her face, so hollow her voice, that Wenceslaus felt as if a statue had spoken. He was far from suspecting she was a wife suffering excess of agony for her husband.

“I am a brute!” he exclaimed; “but I thought you were of better stuff than other women.”

“But who hears of the Inquisition without dread? And yet who need fear the Inquisition in Germany?”

“I should fear it, were I not the eldest son of the Emperor. Many a tyranny which has been driven from the face of day still walks in darkness. What do you suppose keeps your father a prisoner?”

“The conditions imposed by the people of Ulm.”

"The Inquisition; that is, the vicar-general, who insinuates into the Emperor's mind doubts of Count Otto's loyalty."

"That my father refuses to break his word to the Baron of Rabenstein is the strongest proof of his loyalty."

"That is neither political nor Dominican logic: it has nothing but truth in its favor."

"God help us!"

"Say St. Dominic, as his monks assume the authority of God's agents on earth."

"And if I call on Prince Wenceslaus?"

"Under such inspiration, and as king prospective of Bohemia, he will do a knight's *devoir*."

She held out her hand frankly: the prince kissed it, with a fervor that restored the color to her cheeks. But she knew it to be the seal of a promise on which she could rely, and permitted him to lead her to the wide chimney, where great logs snapped and crackled, and sent broad waves of flame bounding and quivering upwards to be lost, like too many brightest gifts, in outer darkness.

"The eyes of the Holy Office we cannot hope to elude: their ears we may; and now, with the solid wall behind us, our own watchfulness to guard the front, we may defy eavesdroppers, unless Father Ignatius has a devil in ordinary dancing on the blaze.—You see who are observing us?—So beautiful a hand ought not to remain unappropriated." Here he drew a ring from one of her fingers, which she coquettishly contested, as he talked on: "Father Matthias, you know, asks for a council of reform through the Emperor. Our tender spiritual father in Rome, in great indignation thereat, orders the punishment of the heretical confessor: he recants, kicks the chalice, and retires from spiritual functions, lest Satan may again prove too strong for his faith. Take care, you are trembling: here, boy!"—(to a page with a goblet)—

"the immortal flame of love and this mortal fire are consuming me."

"Your Highness' pardon : it is for Count Eberhard."

"The more welcome. Drink deep," he whispered, handing the cup to Ludmila, "and bring back the blood to your cheeks." He then drained the goblet, and ordered the page to refill it. "Tell the count that the young lady of Riesen-berg, queen of Love and Beauty, has pledged him, and orders him to recover this for her sake." He dropped into the cup the ring he had drawn from her hand. Count Eberhard took the wine ; and, with a low bow to Ludmila, drank, kissed the ring, and attached it to the chain around his neck.

"See, now, the worth of a bit of courtly grace, vulgarly called hypocrisy," continued the prince. "But I have not told you the worst. His Holiness has issued orders against Waldenses, or those leaning that way ; and to-morrow an edict will be issued forbidding any worship but that of the Roman Catholic Church, *on pain of death* ! In Paris there has been a cheerful fire—an offering of sweet savor unto the nostrils of His Holiness : thirteen hundred fagots of heresy—don't turn pale again !—Talk of the epicures of *old Rome* ! What were peacocks' tongues and slave-fattened mullets to this, in the way of luxury ?" He pressed her hand to his lips as he spoke. Henry of Lichtenstein was passing. "Hymen's silken bonds fetter the fair hands of our Imperial mistress, else she might burst the locks of the Rathhaus ; but how you and I are to do it—Have you a servant who will face death and the devil for you ?"

"Yes : one of Baron Albert's Bohemians."

"Send him to me, secretly."

* * * * *

The festivities over, Count Eberhard and Sir Henry entered the vicar-general's parlor.

"Behold us at your orders, most reverend," said the

former; "but my companion here is even more belligerent than at Beuren. He accuses you, O most Catholic son of St. Dominic, of a breach of faith."

Sir Henry's sullen face confirmed the words.

"He would have faith kept to his own ruin, then; for what less could he have expected, had I placed the Countess Ludmila in his keeping?"

"I should have expected to make her my wife; and, by St. Julian, she should have had little choice!"

"Admitting that achieved, how are you to benefit by her rank and wealth, while she is locked up? And how else could you expect to keep such a compound of mischief and self-will? And what would her friends be about?"

"To what purpose, then, have we kept her father out of the way?" retorted the knight.

"To the purpose of weakening his credit and exalting your own. This young Rabenstein must die the death of a heretic and a traitor: the lady must love somebody——"

"And then comes your turn," added the count. "So rinse down your ill humor with the best wisdom of the Fathers, bottled here for our improvement. I have piously reserved my appetite; for we should never slight the bounties of the Church—martyrdom always excepted."

"Or in short," replied the general, "you would make your own selection among its gifts, as was evident by your devotion to the fair charge of Father Matthias."

"Very like; for my slanderers do not accuse me of hypocrisy. And then, how the devil is a man to make a woman look at him, unless he look very decidedly at her! Ah! that girl has cost me a great many ideas!"

"You will find the ideas of the Emperor's confessor more to the purpose."

"Which means——"

"That the keys of the Imperial conscience have been transferred to my hands."

Both guests uttered an exclamation, the count's was almost a shout.

"Silence, my children! the peace of the Church must not be disturbed at this hour of the night."

"But the Empress——" suggested Eberhard.

"The Empress is a woman," answered the vicar-general in just such a manner as men of hard natures ever use with reference to women.

Eberhard the Riotous was the best of the two. "Our royal lady is a woman," he rejoined, "and loves her husband as I have made many a woman love me who would not have thought of it if I had not first put it into her head. More shame for me, one or two of your cloth have had the courage to tell me. The Empress will therefore follow her husband's lead. But your smile means something, Sir Henry."

"That the Empress's head is not so much weaker than her hand——"

"Which is so much stronger than our own. Well, it is safest not to underrate obstacles."

"Sir Henry has acquired unlimited faith in woman's powers in a very limited time," said the vicar.

A glance at the mutilated visage of St. Dominic checked the knight's angry retort.

"My experience has taught me unlimited faith in them so long as I keep faith with them," added the count; "but there's the Empress's pet: did you see the smile and little hand so regally extended to Wenceslaus? I should not have read that in her face."

"Nor do you now read deep enough. The prince is the most Bohemian of Bohemians," answered the general.

"And what do you read in this?" asked Sir Henry,

abruptly, giving him a coarse drawing of a figure opening the door of a cage whence a lion's head protruded.

"I should read a sphynx-like genealogy for your correspondents: expound unto us."

"Habenicht, the leader of the rebels at Ulm, is opening the prison-door of Count Otto of Riesenberg."

"*Hinc illæ lachrymæ!*" sneered the churchman, fearless of translation.

"A troublesome old fellow, I should say," parenthesized Eberhard, "and likely to interrupt your command of his men and your designs on his heiress."

"We have all the birds in a net which Count Otto's broken strength cannot rend," replied the general; "and neither Hebrew nor heretic will chant David's psalm of deliverance from the snare of this fowler. The Lord of Riesenberg will find a new world by the time he can arrive here. He may not like it so well; but he can then leave it."

* * * * *

The Jew Ozias also was conveyed from the caverns of the Dominican convent at Beuren with the same secrecy which had marked the journey of the lady of Riesenberg; and one chill autumnal night he awoke from the stupor of a narcotic slumber in the Jew's quarter of Nuremberg. He lay shivering, too weak and hopeless even to attempt to ascertain his whereabouts, until the dawn enabled him to discover that he had been placed before the door of a friend, who shortly after issued forth.

"Holy father Abraham!" was his exclamation: "what enemy hath brought a dead man to my house? Surely it will be said that I have slain him!"

"Not dead, Nathan, but sorely suffering," was the answer, in Hebrew. The Jew instantly lifted Ozias, and, half leading, half carrying him within, cautiously refastened his door ere he spoke again. "Ozias, thus stricken!" he then exclaimed.

"Surely the wicked have devoured Israel and laid waste his dwelling-place." Without delay he summoned his household, and attended to the necessities of his guest with the care of a brother, aided by the medicinal skill of which all Jews of education had some tincture.

Elizabeth of Esslingen felt no surprise when a Jewish trader, affecting to offer his commodities for sale, secretly slipped into her hand a bit of parchment. It contained an urgent appeal from Ozias, in the name of all they had suffered and escaped together, that she and her daughter would hasten to his dying bed: the bearer would conduct them safely. The matron's sense of gratitude absorbed every other thought. Anna was, fortunately, with her, and the twilight would secure them from observation. Wrapped in plain, dark mantles, as on the night of their flight from Esslingen, they followed the guide without a question. He knocked loudly at the door in the Jewish quarter, a voice within uttered some words, apparently of question, in Hebrew. Instead of replying, their conductor walked leisurely around the corner of the house out of sight. Elizabeth supposed he was obeying some instructions, until the words from within were repeated in a louder key. Then she trembled as she had trembled before the Governor of Suabia; for here also was mystery. She hesitated until the third summons; when, in German, she briefly told her name and errand. The door was instantly unclosed.

"Enter, lady," said the Israelite, courteously, though with some surprise in his manner. "Since you graciously seek the poor Jew's dwelling, surely my afflicted friend will rejoice to behold you; albeit he is not so ill as you suppose."

He led the way to an apartment, the luxurious elegance of which shamed the most costly furnishing of the Imperial abode, and hastened to summon Ozias, whose consternation he fully shared.

"The Gentiles lie in wait everywhere to destroy us!" groaned the Jew of Esslingen; and he appeared before his visitors with so haggard an aspect that Elizabeth uttered an exclamation of pain and regret. "Think not of me, excellent lady," he replied; "but alas that my name should have been made the snare to lead you into danger! They might have burned me at their stakes, or rent me limb from limb by their instruments of torture, could I but have saved you from their toils!"

"What mystery is this, good Ozias?" rejoined Elizabeth, holding forth the writing received from the guide. "You send for us because you are ill, and we hasten, as we ought, to our greatest earthly benefactor."

"It is a forgery!" the Jew murmured, from rigid lips, while he fixed on Anna a glance of such anguish and alarm that the mother's heart died within her. The daughter looked on both with fear and wonder.

"If it would please you to permit me private speech with you," Ozias at last gained self-possession to say; and, with trembling limbs, Elizabeth followed him into another room, where a brief account of his imprisonment in Beuren, and the questioning and threats of the vicar-general, made apparent the impending danger. "They released me but as a decoy; and, lo, their object is thus made manifest. My days are numbered."

"If all the wealth you snatched from the Governor's hands can avail now to save yourself, it is yours; for your ruin is the price of your generosity to us."

"Woe is me, lady! For your child and yourself, Eberhard loves revenge more than gold; but he would forego both rather than the beauty——" He stopped, shuddering. "He is now leagued with this priest, more cruel and more crafty than himself; and who may escape them? For me, lady, shun and

deny me as you would death ; though I fear it is even now too late."

"God so deal by me as I deal by thee !" said Elizabeth, solemnly. "His will be done ! his testimonies will we keep ! Since we can be of no use to you now, we must hasten hence. You have doubtless some servant who can accompany us ?"

"Alas, it is too late !" said Ozias, with painful embarrassment. "The wretch who betrayed you chose the hour when the gates were about to be closed."

Elizabeth dropped upon the floor, for the first time thoroughly self-abandoned. Ozias lifted her to a couch, and then fell on his knees, with his head bowed in Oriental humiliation. "Who am I, that I should be made the instrument of thy affliction ? Accursed be they who lie in wait as a lion in his den for the murder of the innocent ! Would God that I had died ere this had chanced !"

Aroused by his distress, the afflicted woman placed her hand on his dark locks with the tenderness of a mother. "Faithful servant of the living God, despair not, nor yet doubt ; for, though he chasteneth us sore, he hath not yet delivered us unto death. You have sworn to your own hurt and changed not, and such shall abide in his tabernacle. Your kinsman Nathan will extend us hospitality for this night : we shall abide here, as elsewhere, under the shadow of the Almighty. The morrow is his : he will order it as is best." So spoke the pious matron, sincerely, though with tremulous lips.

The next morning, soon as the barriers within which the meek and redeemed Christians confined the vile and accursed Hebrews were opened, they were crossed, first by a Jew with a pack on his shoulders, then by two women closely screened in dark mantles. Without apparent intent, the three pursued the same course, through streets and lanes so straggling, tortuous, and abrupt that they seemed trying to escape from each other, until within the heart of the city, when the Jew

plunged into a side-street, and the women continued to the house of Elizabeth. There Anna threw herself sobbing on her bed : her mother, pale yet collected, poured wine for her fainting child, drank some to revive her own benumbed frame, then knelt and prayed long and earnestly.

That night Ozias was consigned to the dungeons of the Rathhaus.

* * * * *

By the united aid of Carl and Zdenko, Ludmila achieved a secret interview with Berethold, in which he had felt it imperative to prepare her for every peril which might threaten, by communicating his full opinion of the conduct of the General of the Dominicans. It was with difficulty that she comprehended him : then she fell on her knees, sobbing bitterly in horror and indignation. "Oh my father! my father!" she ejaculated, in agony of heart.

"The Father in heaven can do more for you than the earthly father," said Berethold, reverently. Yet it is so natural for the young to turn first to the visible parent, that it was long ere the young girl could look this last and greatest peril in the face, and collect herself to meet it alone, with God's help. But, when she spoke again, her composure surprised the minstrel. "Return now with Carl," she said : "you can help us no further, and must not imperil yourself by communion with me. Take care of your old master, and trust me to watch over Baron Albert." That night she read longer than usual in the manuscript Testament in the Bohemian tongue, her mother's most precious bequest ; and, when her eyes grew dim with tears and vigil, she lay down with it clasped in her hands, resolved that its meditations should secure the quiet of her slumbers and the strength of her awakening. .

"At last it is a pitched battle ! But why is it ? Who could have divined it ?"

Thus she mused the next day, and aloud, supposing herself alone; but a hand was laid caressingly on her head, and the hard, unsympathetic voice of the vicar-general repeated: "A pitched battle! and between whom?"

She did not reply, needing her utmost efforts to control the tremor that shook her whole being; and he continued: "Think between whom, fair child. A Jew, an apostate friar, an unformed youth drawn into heresy and rebellion—all prisoners. A fourth—shall I name the fourth, Ludmila?" She looked up with her natural arch smile. "You know her, then—a young, slight girl, high indeed in rank and wealth, the idol of a noble father and an Imperial court, yet but a girl. A pitched battle between these and the Church of Rome, wielding the military and civil power of the Christian world!"

He paused; but she only repeated, wonderingly, "Who could have divined it? Whence is it?"

"You mean, who could have divined the result from your visit to the Castle of Rabenstein? Without it, the same destiny awaited the others. You neither guided nor accelerated it. You may separate yourself from them without self-reproach. Would you still sacrifice yourself to this churlish youth—who may, indeed, like any other boor, admire your beauty, but cannot value the rarer charms, the grace, the genius, the poetic courage, which enhance it—and condemn some truer lover, a man in intellect, in achievement, and in power, whose glory would encircle your own brow like a diadem, to sigh hopelessly?"

To his hearer's imagination such was Albert; and, thus appropriating such words, her love so irradiated her face as she listened that the general misinterpreted her emotion into an acquiescence in his own meaning. He took her hand gently. "You understand me, then, Ludmila? You yield?"

Her hand trembled, but she spoke low, and thoughtfully:

"There are four of us, you say, against the Church of Rome, the power of the Christian world. Our Lord the Christ, walking by the sea, saw two brethren casting a net, and called them to follow him; and, going on, he saw two other brethren, whom he also summoned. Ought not those four to have been the happiest of their people? Yet they dared a greater Rome than yours!"

The general gazed on her with speechless amazement, so far was he from expecting such a "Confession of Faith." He had supposed no opposition to the Church beyond her romantic love to Albert. "Rash child," he exclaimed, "it is well that no one less devoted to you than myself hears such words!"

"Are they not true words?"

"What application have they to your fanciful regard for this boy of Rabenstein,—a regard bred of your own generous sympathy with the prayers of that wild Bohemian bard?"

"None."

"Ah! Then you throw off this dream——"

"No!" The voice was firm, but still low and tender.

"Daughter of elf-land that you are, how shall I understand you?"

"Pardon me, my lord, that I know not why you need understand me."

"If you would save this youth, there is need that we understand each other."

"I wish—I intend—to save him."

"You challenge the German Empire and the Church to single combat! Act for them, act with them, Ludmila, and command them—through me! Save this self-degraded serf, if you will, and forget him, as you should. At your word he is free,—to sink again into obscurity; and you assume a power which no other woman ever swayed, to which no other woman is equal. You are ambitious: the Emperor bows to

the requirements of Rome, and Rome requires what I dictate. Rule me, Ludmila, with those eyes of love, with that voice of music, and you rule the world !”

It was indeed fortunate that the minstrel had given his young mistress the clew to these remarks. Even thus prepared, she grew pale and flushed by turns from affright and just anger. She arose and stood in shrinking modesty, while she uttered, in a broken voice, “*What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?*”

And this worldly and wily man, accustomed to scan every one around him as to their fitness to be made his tools, now—for who can deceive us so well as ourselves?—viewed the young girl’s emotion as the evidence of her yielding in his favor, and hastily rejoined, “Leave such dark sayings to visionary ascetics, and know also the laborer is worthy of his hire; and, while the Church wills that those who serve her devote themselves body and soul to her work and have no worldly treasures to distract them from her duties, she has indulgences for those who have toiled long and successfully for her glory, and is far from requiring them to sacrifice all that blesses and renews the hearts of other men when worn with the burden and heat of the day. With your love as my inspiration and reward, nothing that the Church can give will be beyond my grasp, and princes and states may yet look to you as the arbiter of their fate.”

“I ask but for one life,” murmured Ludmila.

“It is yours—if you are mine !”

“My lord, I am, as you have said, a young, weak girl, spoiled, rash, and headstrong, yet, but for this bitter hour, still ignorant of evil; almost an orphan, too. I would gladly cling to your robe, believing in the purity and penance that it typifies; but, since that may not be, at least spare me the further agony and shame of your presence and your words !”

The general’s eyes gleamed with triumph, and his lips

parted with a smile which he meant to be tender, but which was only sensually cruel. Comparing his victim's smothered voice and constrained bearing with her natural clear tones and fearless manner, he still ascribed the change to a timid sentiment in his favor, checked by girlish bashfulness and by dread of blame. "Enchantress!" he whispered, "what Beatrice was to Dante, Laura to Petrarca, be you to me; and this robe to which you would cling shall be the cloud and the flame between ourselves and the Egyptians whom you fear. Once enfolded in my arms——" He leaned towards her, with outstretched hands, like the talons of a vulture stooping over his prey. At once she threw herself back in full loftiness, not merely as Countess of Riesenbergh, but as Baroness of Rabenstein,—guardian of another's honor as of her own! She interposed a hand as strong in its expression as his: he seemed so to understand it; for he paused, and a cloud came over his face.

"Then I am to leave your favored lover in the prisons of the Senate?"

"Leave him, then! God will deliver him!" Her eyes flashed, her voice swelled, as Martin had described them in reciting his baffled enterprise in the Böhmerwald.

"Child! do you know to what you leave him?"

"To death, so far as your will is concerned."

"Death, Ludmila! He shall pray for death as the fever-stricken pray for slumber, or, rather, as the coward prays for life. He shall pray even for the fire that would release him!"

"You may be permitted to inflict martyrdom; but it is of God's will, not of yours." In her anger and enthusiasm she looked beautiful and strong as the Pythian Apollo,—as if the serpent were already slain. The general gazed with the same revolting admiration.

"Darling of nature that you are, who can look at you and remain angry? No, Ludmila: I *will* not yet be answered

Pause until you can ask those who know them, of the caverns of the Rathhaus, whence no sound can reach this outer world; ask of its torture-chambers, where is stored every thing that human wit, barbed by hatred, can invent to sharpen human suffering to frenzy and yet deny it death! And when there is no longer music in a prisoner's howls, the Virgin of Nuremberg is not so coy as you: her heart is large, if not warm, and all are welcome to it!"

The expression of her face at this allusion to *die verfluchte Jungfer* touched a lingering human sympathy in him.

"Ludmila," he added, "I, too, was once ready to sacrifice the world for a childish impulse: the world has taught me, what you must learn, expediency. *I love you!* In those books you know so well, it is written, 'Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, think on them.' Thus I think on you, not with a youth's fitful fancy for the blue eyes and rosy cheeks of a doll, but with the eyes, the understanding, the pride and the passion of manhood for that rare union of womanly beauty, power, and love yet to be perfected in you—treasures marked for my own—mine, or——" He paused, as if measuring her strength.

"I accept the alternative."

With the same secure smile of revolting admiration on his face, he left her; and she sat down, all trembling, now crimson with shame and indignation, then pale and cold with fear; and still, at intervals, she moaned, "My father! my father!"

Soon, however, the natural elasticity of youth restored hope and courage. Her first thought of action was to direct Zdenko to seek Prince Wenceslaus. Then, at twilight, she left the castle, and walked rapidly through the town to the house of Elizabeth, followed by Carl, whom she would then have dismissed; but the old soldier bluntly refused.

"You are going into danger, and my lord will expect me to go with you."

"Why do you think that I am going into danger?"

"I feel so: I heard Sir Henry of Lichtenstein speak your name to the Emperor's new confessor."

"Answer me one question, then: what do you think you would gain if you could get all this world for the loss of your soul?"

"Gain? Gracious heavens, my lady, we must die and leave this world behind us; and what have we to carry into the next, but our souls?"

"And if you could save your life by the loss of your soul?"

"A small saving my life would be. Yours, now—but who knows? The young die."

"Just my own thought. Stay, then: we will hope to save both life and soul."

Ludmila heard the adventure with Ozias anxiously, indeed, but not with the dismay it had created in Elizabeth and her daughter. To them it was the renewal of terror that had almost slumbered; to her it was but a tightening of the chain she had long seen closing around them all. But why point it out to those who could not break a single link. So she sat in silent suffering until Elizabeth said, "It is time." Then the three arose, and, so dressed as to attract least observation, left the house, followed—guarded, he thought—by Carl. After a walk, not long, but circuitous, Elizabeth tapped at the back door of an apparently deserted house. Admitted with great caution, they were led downward into a vault, and through a concealed aperture into a plain apartment filled with benches, on which a few persons were seated, by whom Elizabeth and her party ranged themselves, save Carl, who chose to watch the workings of the secret door, understanding now that this was a meeting of believers in the *sub ultra que*, as those were called who required the Lord's Supper under both forms.

A plain table served the pastor as a pulpit. After it seemed to him that his flock were all present, he uttered a short but fervent prayer for guidance, for protection, for patience. Then he sang with the congregation the hymn "In the Lord put I my trust;" after which he read from Isaiah certain verses calculated to comfort and to encourage his hearers:—"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever." "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," &c. There was next a long pause, as if for due reflection on the inspired utterances, and perhaps to collect his own strength; for, when he rose again, it was with deep emotion that he repeated, "Hear ye, and give ear: be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken!" and proceeded to recount the religious history of Father Matthias Janow, his zealous toil for the purification of the Church and the good of the people, his gospel teachings, his meek demeanor, his sudden, strange apostasy. "Be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken; and the weakness of the flesh is made manifest," he continued. "We are not to judge the erring, but to watch and pray lest we also fall. He trusted in princes, and they failed him: for the kingdom we seek is not of this world: therefore did the Lord call his apostles not from among princes, but from the lowly and suffering; therefore came He despised and rejected, a man of sorrow, that the world might see the power of his gospel to open the eyes of the blind, to bind up the broken heart, to free the captives of affliction and sin; that the great of the earth might learn the poverty and weakness of their riches and might; learn to seek salvation through tribulation, through torture, through death even—what price is too great for such salvation? Be not proud: for threatenings and slaughter are breathed against us: trials and temptations will beset us; and, having confessed that our Lord the Christ died for us, shall we refuse to suffer for him? We may be

scattered, but he will call us around him ; we may die, but he will make us alive ; for he hath said it. ' Whosoever shall confess me before man, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God ; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God ! ' Therefore, before we part this night, perhaps forever, let us renew and strengthen our faith by fulfilling his last command and celebrating his last ordinance."

He opened a secret crypt in the wall, where were arranged the typical elements of that Communion through which those few but firm believers looked to the eternal communion of the bliss of heaven. Then, repeating the solemn words of consecration, he dispensed the bread to the deeply-moved worshippers. This partaken, the emblematic wine was blessed ; and Ludmila, being nearest, first received the chalice from the good man's hands. She had but tasted, when a rude blow dashed it down ; and, lifting her eyes, she met the malicious glance of Martin, the lay-brother, the emissary of the vicar-general. Carl sprang forward ; but, before he could reach his mistress, the lights were put out, amid a murmur of " Betrayed ! " For the secret door was thrown open, and the clatter of weapons and rude oaths at the darkness declared the presence of soldiers. But the assailed uttered not a word. Ludmila felt a strong grasp on each arm ; a mantle was thrown over her head, and she was hurried forth, she knew not whither : it was enough that she knew why.

Anna, too, was seized. But the arm, which encircled her with a pressure equally firm and tender, she should have evaded as a serpent's coil ; the voice that whispered safety she should have dreaded as a serpent's hiss. Do not blame her that her first agony of alarm was alleviated by that voice ; for her instant answer was, " My mother ! "

" You shall save her," was rejoined, as she was hurried on, trembling, partly with fear of her guide, partly, alas ! of her-

self; nor had she collected herself to measure time or space, when she was led within-doors and into a luxurious apartment, where the strong right hand, removed from her waist, was as deftly used in laying off her veil and mantle as ever on the helm and corslet of its owner.

Then, as she stood before him, her plain dark robe becoming her statuesque proportions and marble pallor better than courtly drapery and jewels, her brown eyes dilated, her hair hanging heavily around her white shoulders, her beauty seemed unearthly.

"You are safe, Anna," he said, gently; "safe! Thanks to the friend who, knowing my love to you, gave me timely warning of your danger. But for that, I shudder to think of the doom against which even my love and my power could not have prevailed."

"But my mother! my mother!" was all the agitated girl could say.

"She shall suffer no evil I can avert. Sit, Anna; sit, my panting dove, and let me kneel at your feet—your slave. Fear nothing now: you know that I love you." He paused to read in her sudden blush and wavering glance her willingness to believe.

"Be my wife, Anna," he continued, "and escape the fate impending over those, enthusiasts perhaps, who would struggle against Rome for a few idle ceremonies which can matter nothing to our happiness. Be my wife, if only for your mother's sake; for only as one of my household can I rescue her. Remember, you have trusted to Father Matthias; and where now is his power? Trust me with the life I have saved, with the heart whose tenderness and generosity have completed the conquest your beauty begun! Trust me with your mother's life: it hangs upon your words. Spare me those reproachful tears: I cannot be generous in this. See! to save you, I have braved the Emperor's displeasure and the

enmity of the General of the Dominicans. To snatch your mother from the sentence she has provoked, will be even more dangerous. Do not decree her death and my despair."

And the timid girl, whose heart, always wax to the hand of kindness, was now shaken with terror for her parent, yielded to the practised flattery and dangerous fascination of Eberhard the Riotous. He threw open a side-door. "Within, Anna, you will find a tirewoman, who will array you as becomes the bride of Eberhard of Wurtemberg, while I summon my chaplain."

He left her to meet Father Ignatius in another room.

"So you persist in this child's play?" he asked.

"More than ever. I tell you, most irreverend, that this girl shall be as innocent——"

"As your virtuous precept and example can make her."

"True; for I believe there is virtue in the world, and have sense enough to wish it to continue in the woman who thinks herself my wife."

"*Sic notus Ulysses!*" returned the General. "Appear, young sanctity!" And Rupert, in the robes of a Dominican friar, made his obeisance.

"You are perfect in your lesson?" asked his master. "If you mar but a letter to excite suspicion—you know me! Your share in the compact, O heavenly guide, is to restore my bride's mother to her house."

"Mirror of knighthood, it shall be done!" And Father Ignatius withdrew by a concealed door that communicated with the convent.

The count found Anna resplendent in the bridal attire, costly and rare enough for an empress, which his care had provided. Her timid eyes full of the soft light of a new hope of happiness for her mother and herself—she, who had entered womanhood an orphan, oppressed by the atmosphere of some unknown evil, now so loved, so protected—was it

strange that these thoughts should aid to control the emotions of her sudden and bewildering position? Was it strange that her first vision of romance should fade?—that the melancholy dark eyes of her Hebrew champion should be eclipsed by the brilliant audacity of the blue orbs which expressed equal love and self-reliance?

Rupert was “perfect in his lesson,” which he recited with an unction derived from the still galling recollection of the defeat of which he considered poor Anna the head and front; and the solemn words were uttered with childlike faith on one side, on the other with a triumphant recklessness that all vows are unto the Lord, and he will require them.

* * * * *

The tribunal of the Senate of Nuremberg, in all the dangerous power conferred by Charles IV. in reward for their successful advocacy of his election! But this secret tribunal now affects a sort of frankness and publicity. The Baron of Rabenstein is admitted. There are other witnesses, carefully chosen indeed, and the vicar-general, who has arranged all this. Zahera's eyes wander anxiously from the stern array of senatorial authority to a door which is at last opened, when he starts, and his pallor becomes even more ghastly. It is but Father Cyrillus borne in upon a litter. Their eyes meet: those of the noble fall before the look, which, first flashing with all the fierce impulse of the monk's character, changed slowly to an expression which its victim felt to be neither hate nor vengeance, but doom, distinct, inexorable. Albert was next led in, composed until he saw his father and his tutor, when a shiver ran over him. The first gave no sign of recognition: the latter threw up one arm, and groaned forth, “My son! my son!” But the sole reply was a quick, fierce glance, and the young man turned his back upon his tutor. Next came Ozias. There was a pause, a consultation between the General and a Senator, and finally

a female figure was led in, closely veiled, who moved steadily on and surveyed her judges without faltering; but, as she looked on her companions in peril, her strength failed, and she would have fallen but for the arm of one of the officials. Father Ignatius joined her, and whispered, "There is yet time——" "To die!" she hastily rejoined, and he withdrew; yet he had rightly judged that compassion for others would move her more than fear for herself.

Ozias was the first accused—of witchcraft, of rebellion, and of theft; and Rupert was called. He related his meeting at night with Elizabeth and her daughter, the appearance of the Jew, their midnight flight from Esslingen, his pursuit, skirmish, and defeat. He told of the disappearance of their wealth, and of his own subsequent meeting with and recognition of all the parties. He told the truth, for it was enough.

"You see, noble Senators, that only by sorcery could this son of an accursed race have brought under his power these Christian women; and his spells had prevailed only because they were tainted with heresy, for which the power of evil was suffered still further to prevail over them. The wealth, forfeited by the treason of the husband and father, the noble Count of Wurtemberg had designed to continue to the abandoned wife and daughter: it had vanished—how, save by sorcery? But there is still further testimony against him—a pious lay-brother of the monastery of the order of the blessed St. Dominic;" and Martin was brought forward. He had met the accused in the mountains of Bohemia as a gray old man; he had there seen him produce fire from a vial of water. Suspecting him of evil intent towards the Church and the Empire, he had sent with him to Nuremberg a soldier. And here the soldier was produced, to tell that, before they reached Nuremberg, the Jew had transformed himself into a young man, and he, in mortal fear of being turned into some monster by the same means, had fled away from him.

"It is enough," said the General, with a glance at the Senators, who assented; and the witnesses were withdrawn. "What have you done with the money and jewels for which you enticed those wretched women from their home?" he asked.

Ozias colored with pride and indignation, and his eyes blazed upon the questioner. "The jewels are in the hands of their owners: the money also was bestowed according to their will."

"For the jewels, we can learn the truth; for the money, your evasion cannot pass, Jew. Where is it?"

"The trust of the widow and the fatherless I may not betray, my lord."

"Under the late edict against heretics, their lives and fortune are forfeited." Ozias gasped. "The Church releases you from your trust. Speak!"

"I am forbidden."

"By whom, or what?"

"It is written, 'Ye shall not afflict any widow and fatherless child!'" Here the veiled female by a slight sign called the vicar-general to her side. "May I speak to him?" she asked; and, receiving consent, she whispered to Ozias, "Confess even for their sakes. Your sufferings will be a lifelong agony to them; and, if they are in the same plight with ourselves, your refusal is but self-murder." He shook his head.

"For God's sake, spare yourself in mercy to me, then!"

"Lady, I am doomed: shall I disgrace a life of honor to avoid the pangs of a few hours?"

"God is near you, Ozias. Pray that he may support me in like manner." She withdrew, and the questioning was suddenly turned to another point.

"You know the leader of the rebels at Ulm: who is he?"

"All know that he calls himself Habenicht."

"He sent you to Bohemia: to whom?"

"Your witness knows that I carried merchandise after the custom of my people."

"You carried also a paper, which he dared not take, lest it should contain some spell that might destroy him, and so suffered you to burn it. Who wrote it? To whom was it written? What did it contain?"

"The promise of the God of my fathers is to him that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not."

"Jew, you blaspheme, taking God's prophecies to excuse your defiance of the Church and the Empire. You refuse, then, to confess your share in this rebellion? You refuse to reveal the wealth which you conveyed from Esslingen?"

He assented. The presiding Senator ordered him removed. Ozias fixed his eyes sternly on the vicar-general, and said, "I can die and escape your tortures; but, were I to deliver the bread of the widow and orphan to hypocrites, oppressors, and spoilers——"

A gag was thrust into his mouth, and he was hurried out,—whither, and for what purpose, was not said; but a chill horror ran through the veins of the other prisoners.

Father Cyrillus was next summoned, and placed in a sitting posture by the officials, who then threw back his hood.

"You were taken in arms against the Emperor. What moved you to this rebellion?"

"The love of God and of the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free."

"You are suspected of heresy. In what manner did you administer the Holy Sacrament?"

"In both kinds, as the gospel teaches."

"And you deny that the *whole* Christ is received in each form?"

"The body of Christ is in heaven: he has one body only, and no more."

"Do you know this book?" asked the vicar-general.

"I do."

"Noble Senators, this book was found in this apostate's hermitage at Rabenstein. That you may judge of his blasphemous guilt, I will utter something of it:—'Christ appointed no punishment for transgressors of his commandments;' 'Priests know better how to extort money from men than to cleanse them from sin;' 'Celebrations in honor of the saints have arisen from some evil cause.' Such are some of the heretical vomitings of an Englishman, who calls the Pope Antichrist, who denies the power of the Church, and would sweep away all religion for the license of guilt and ignorance. I will disturb your ears no more with his horrible profanity: its fruits are before you. Albert of Rabenstein, stand forth! Perverted to rebellion against your father, your liege-lord, your country, and your God, by this arch-traitor: say, will you abjure him and his pernicious doctrines?"

"Will I abjure him? Yes!" And the young man's voice rang out full and firm, as if it were uttered to the echoes of his native mountains instead of to walls that heard no sounds but the harsh queries of power and the monotonous groans of woe. The monk leaned forward with shuddering surprise.

"You abjure him and his heresies?"

"I do not know them."

"You will then return to the rank you have abandoned, to your allegiance, to your religion?"

Albert opened his tunic so as to discover the serf's collar around his well-turned throat. "This emblem marks my rank; my allegiance is to Freedom, my religion, faith in Him who said, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'"

"Abjure me, then—abjure all the world, so you still confess the truth." So murmured the monk; but a fierce grasp from the familiar at his side warned him to silence.

"You persevere, then, in your rebellion, in your heresies,

in your disobedience? You know that the reading of false books is a creeping pestilence to the souls so dearly purchased with the blood of Christ; and it may be seen in this, that, while you affect knowledge and judgment of the mysteries of that book which the Church prohibits to laymen, you despise the great command, 'Honor thy father!'

Albert first crimsoned with embarrassment, and then turned pale, with a deeper feeling.

"Such, Senators, are the delusions of heresy, with which that fallen monk has poisoned his boyhood. But there is yet more. By heresy he is exposed to the snares of witchcraft. Speak, prisoner!" (addressing Father Cyrillus,) "and recount the appearance at Rabenstein of that sorceress by whom this youth was seduced into defiance of even your authority, and at last spirited from the dungeons of the castle, its bolts and sentinels, to the rebel mob in Ulm."

The General controlled the sneer which accompanied his thought. Yet Albert's fine nerves felt it; though the jar was instantly forgotten in the subject thus suddenly touched, which indeed startled all present, as if the flash of lightning and roar of thunder had burst into that tribunal that seemed so far removed from the heavens whence come the lightnings and the thunder. And now Ludmila first trembled for herself, in the dread of betrayal. Albert trembled with rage at this double treachery of his tutor. The baron, who had sat like the effigies which would one day adorn the stone portal of that castle of which no heir covets possession, aroused himself, thinking to learn the mystery of that last scene at Rabenstein,—of the ring; and Father Cyrillus, guiltily conscious of the cause of his pupil's anger, trembled to see it further excited by revelations which perhaps even his silence might not prevent.

Then Albert turned, and lifted his hand, whether in warning or defiance the monk did not see: he saw only the ring;

and the question he had never dared to ask, he now called on Father Ignatius to put: "Whence came it?"

"I cannot tell."

"Permit me, noble lords, and you, reverend father, to give some portion of its history, which may serve to clear the rest. That ring I chose years since from the jewels of the deceased Baroness of Rabenstein, the mother of this wretched boy, as a betrothal gift from him to the young Countess Ludmila of Riesenbergh, to whose father's hands I gave it; yet at the moment when he refused to fulfil that contract, he displayed this ring as a pledge from some undiscoverable female, he knows not whom, to whom he madly called himself troth-plight."

The Baron said more than the General had intended, and the increased rigidity of his features expressed a wrath to which Count Otto's outbursts were but as summer sunbeams. A dim suspicion entered the mind of Father Cyrillus, and he gave one hasty glance at the female prisoner; but to Albert there came no awakening from the dream-land into which Ludmila had led him. And the Baron advanced a step; another; and the lowered brow and lurid glance, so long unprovoked, marked the face of his son, and checked him. Yet he said: "Albert, my son, confess these delusions; abjure the heresies of this arch-traitor; receive the absolution of the Church and the pardon of the Emperor, and return to the rank and the duties of your birth." He spoke with effort, his voice low and choked, perhaps from weakness, perhaps from tenderness. The monk listened; and a faint flush on his cheek, a strange light in his eye, a compressed smile around his lips, a triumphant expression, startled the Baron: was it from the assurance that his suit would fail? That look astounded him: he turned to the Vicar-General, to the dark windings of whose heart he had no clew, for aid.

"If the ring were conveyed to him by the delusions of *witchcraft*, to remove it may break them," was his sugges-

tion. He made a sign accordingly to an official; but Father Cyrillus said, "I too know something of that ring."

"Speak, then."

"There was once a soldier, born a serf in Bohemia, and freed by the kindness of his lord. He fought at Scharndorf under the banners of Sir Adolf of Weinsperg, then saved his leader's life, and received that ring in token of his gratitude. He sent it to his wife." Zahera shivered visibly. "Say on," uttered the cold voice of the General. "This soldier loved a maiden of his own rank, whose beauty caught the eye of her *childless* lord. Thence came the freedom of the betrothed youth; thence the insinuation of a hope of manhood to be won, and a future in man's rights; thence the recommendation to a knight who ever led where the hardest blows were given and taken. So Conrad went; and, between force and fraud, his betrothed was borne to the castle, and there wedded to her lord. But what force so strong as love, what fraud so subtle? Ere Conrad departed, an old priest of the Waldenses joined those lovers, according to his creed, in the sight of God; and thus, Zahera of Rabenstein, *my wife* was betrayed into the secret passages of your accursed stronghold,—*my son* born beneath your ancestral banner!"

The Baron's fierce yet fearful glance became more rigid: he tossed his arms, in a gasp of agony for breath: then, a horrid gurgling, and he fell prone. Albert stood transfixed with what he had heard and what he saw. The veiled figure, womanlike, was first to start forward, and, throwing back the mantle that shrouded her, to sink down beside the stricken man, to raise his head on her arm, while, darting a glance of angry reproach on Father Cyrillus, she exclaimed, "You have killed him!"

Horror-struck, bewildered, the monk muttered, "The Sorceress!"

"Liska?" burst from Albert's lips. On the instant the veil

was replaced by an official; but could those two, ever haunted by that face, forget its flashing eyes, the wealth of wavy tresses falling around its oval outline?

On the instant, also, the gaunt and deathlike form of the Baron was lifted by the General's order, carried from the Council-Chamber, accompanied by a Senator, his friend, and by a monk who had been taking notes by the side of Father Ignatius; and the secret tribunal of Nuremberg moved on, unrelaxing, unrelenting as fate. Ere the son could realize the words of the declared father, the fatal struggle of the suppositious, or the sudden gleam of that mysterious one so madly loved, so madly sought,—in short, while he was like one transported through the mazes of years in the moments of a wild dream, there came—not an awakening, but—a new phase in that bewildering fight. “Ludmila, Countess of Riesenbergh,” called the General of the Dominicans. But his voice had lost something of its usual hardness: the rapidity of his utterance would have betrayed to a sympathetic ear the very dread of self-betrayal of some interest in the name strangely at variance with his position and its duties.

At the name a quiver of almost mortal agony convulsed the monk: then his face burned with the blush of self-accusation. All was clear; and his revenge, his superstition, his self-will, had betrayed that young, devoted life! His head dropped as if the steel of a *matador* had entered his spine.

“Ludmila, Countess of Riesenbergh, you are here arraigned of rebellion, heresy, and witchcraft.”

The repetition startled Albert from his stupor: he threw himself at Ludmila's feet: “Liska! look on me: speak to me: break the maddening dream that chains me!”

Here the grasp of law and religion again restrained him; but he listened as if his life were continued only in her breath; for she acknowledged her presence in Beuren.

Martin was summoned anew: the hapless Eblis convicted of a familiar spirit: his mistress's fearless manner and gay words in the Böhmerwald construed into reliance on magic powers, and the climax reached in the midnight explosion at the peasant's hut, and the disappearance of herself and the minstrel. What could so clearly establish the agency of the Father of Evil as—gunpowder?

Father Cyrillus was next called on to repeat the tale of sorcery he had confided to the General, and that also of his own betrayal of the prisoner, as a sorceress, to his superior in Beuren: he could only groan in his remorse, and the groan was a confession.

Then came the heresy, and its proof in her presence in the assembly of the *subutraque*, and the New Testament, abstracted from her apartments, in the hands of the Vicar-General. She forgot her danger in her indignation.

"Do you not know," he asked, "that the Church decided this book to be imperfect and dangerous, save as interpreted by her authority?"

"I know that we are there told to search the Scriptures for"—A quick gesture from the Inquisitor, and the familiar at her side seized her rudely and enforced silence. With a glare in his eyes like the flash of steel in the sunlight, the General asked Albert, "Who is this Habenicht, the rebel leader?"

In the young man's state of mind, this question, so abruptly introduced, might have produced the truth—if he had known it. As it was, he could only reply, "That he reveals to no one."

"Whence comes the money with which he feeds rebellion?"

"I know not."

The Inquisitor addressed these questions rather to Albert than to Father Cyrillus, feeling that the latter might yield to his son's danger what could not be wrung from his own tortures. He now whispered to a familiar by his side. Were

the words intended for other ears? If so, they were answered in a cry that woke the petrified Senators, not to pity, but amazement; and again unveiled, pale as a phantom, her lips quivering with the agony that only her eyes could speak, Ludmila threw herself on her knees before the Vicar-General. In that instant of supreme dread, there rushed in one of the keepers of that den of horrors, breathlessly and without ceremony addressing Father Ignatius. He, betraying no discomposure, spoke a few words to the Senator nearest him, and left the Chamber. The prisoners were hurried out, doubtful whether to death or delay, while the judges remained pale and alarmed for that, while they, in the futile strength of human blindness, were aping the powers of the great King of Terrors, he, uninvoked, unsuspected, was hovering around that highest head, whose fall must fearfully shake themselves—for the Emperor was suddenly ill, and had required the instant attendance of his confessor.

But the farce was played out: the troublesome and suspicious "people" could not now talk of abused authority and secret sacrifices: there had been a trial, and witnesses to the guilt of the accused.

* * * * *

How brightly rose the sun next morning, his beams calling on all who were blessed in beholding him to rejoice and be strengthened! But his great eye beheld, just without the towers of Nuremberg, a stake, a chair with chains, fagots piled all around it, armed men drawn up in formal guardianship of this consecrated spot, forms in dark robes and cowls flitting around to see that all was done fitly and in order: he beheld crowds issuing from the gates of Nuremberg moving towards this place, men and women, old and young, children, too, that they might be early impressed with the sanctity, the divinely parental care, of that creed which was about to offer up to the King of Glory and to the forgiving, saving, cruci-

fied Redeemer, a burnt-sacrifice of human life,—a Jew, a sorcerer, a rebel,—in awful argument against Judaism, witchcraft, and rebellion: he beheld what man could do to render void God's gifts to man. Bells rang slowly, each note dying in that vibration which says "death!" as distinctly, even more alarmingly, than the tongue of the preacher. From the Rath-House issued the Dominicans, in their black mantles and white tunics, under the holy shadow of the standard of the Inquisition whence St. Dominic gazed down on his children, grimly devout, as he might have gazed on the battle-field of Muret and its hecatombs of Albigenses offered to Him who said, "Blessed are the merciful!"—and where the Cross, the emblem of the Long-Suffering, was blazoned harmoniously between the sword and the olive-tree,—knights-hospitallers, Senators, civil magistrates, officials of the Senate, soldiers, all that could express the power of the Church and the Empire; and, in the midst of this procession, a rude litter hung with black, where lay prostrate one mangled form, not less of those whom *God made in his own image* than they who marched around him in the full splendor of the CHURCH TRIUMPHANT.

Slowly through the principal street and out over the draw-bridge winds the long procession, the monotonous chant of the monks proclaiming the pious zeal with which they sacrificed others in the name of the Saviour who sacrificed *himself*. On to the amphitheatre, walled by the primeval forest, where the soldiery are drawn up for the purifying and strengthening of their faith, and the train pause before the fagots and the stake. And the sun still shines; the river glides sparkling in his rays; the south wind murmurs love-songs to the pines, whose answering sighs diffuse such fragrance; flocks of birds, as if conscious that not a *sparrow falls to the ground without the Father of all*, flutter in the warm air of that rare autumnal day, uttering short notes as of congratulation. All nature, save human nature, rejoices in the beneficence of God; human nature

rejoices in its permission to pervert that beneficence—rejoices in its own intensity of sin! The pall is withdrawn from the prisoner's ghastly face. Has he escaped? No; the question was skilfully applied: his brow contracts with agony at the rude touch of the executioners, and the Dominican monks on each side exhort and denounce with equal energy, holding the crucifix before his eyes. The pale lips move: the monks bend over for the confession, but hear only murmured words in Hebrew.—“He calls on his familiar spirit,” they say. Let us hope it is indeed a familiar spirit whom he invokes, when he says, “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust.

“The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God.”

“Wretch, dost thou call upon devils to aid thee at this late hour,” exclaimed one of the friars, “or to throw their enchantments upon us? Legions of angels are guarding us, while demons wait around to seize thine accursed soul!” But the victim continued, “Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise, for the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me——”

“Let the flames silence him!” And the executioners seized the exhausted frame, that quivered with agony to which the strong soul, disciplined in danger and self-denial, refused any other complaint than a deep, shuddering sigh: they tossed, rather than seated, the broken limbs and crushed trunk upon the chair provided. Small need was there of the chains; yet, as they wound them around him, Ozias lifted his head, a smile on his lips, his eyes radiant as from the recognition of a redeeming friend. He spoke this time aloud, and in German: “I will greatly praise the Lord among the multitude; for he

shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul!"

Then the last shadow passed over his face. Hurriedly the torch was applied to the sacrificial pile. Too late! God had saved him from those that condemned his soul!

* * * * *

It was near midnight. The Empress, her attendants dismissed, was anxiously pacing her private apartment, when Wenceslaus entered. "My father sleeps," he said: "the physicians have better hope of his health."

Elizabeth crossed herself devoutly. "My son," she then said, "art thou as grateful as myself for this reprieve?"

"Never doubt it, mother!" replied the Prince: "never doubt that I have looked up to this impending greatness as a man might look upon an avalanche sliding towards his devoted head. All the toils and struggles of diplomacy which I have witnessed without sharing, almost without comprehending, have returned to my mind like ghosts, as if to show me my inability to exorcise such visitants. Wild and indolent I am, but neither so stupid as to fancy my brain fit to bear the Empire of Germany, nor so foolish as to desire it,—no, nor yet so ungrateful. And now, mother, there are other things to be thought on. The Lady Ludmila must be free this night."

"How is it possible? Besides, Father Ignatius assures me that those arrests would not have been made had he supposed any of the Imperial household could have been found among the heretics. A mere formal submission will release Ludmila."

"Berethold, the old minstrel of Rabenstein, has told me other things. I have talked, too, with this Henry of Lichtenstein—an honor he would gladly have avoided—in which talk I permitted myself to assume a fold of the Imperial purple for the furtherance of my objects. So between the minstrel's revelations and suspicions and Sir Henry's confessions I am satisfied of the Vicar-General's pious belief in the

Dominican theory of the right of property, (as to wealth and beauty in his case,) and consider the Franciscans perfectly right in denouncing both the order and the Pope for abetting it."

"My son, my son, he is thy father's confessor."

"And therefore when I meet him I only say, 'Your blessing, Father!' and he replies, 'Benedicite, mi fili.' But this day I read in his eye that he thought soon to exchange the experienced Prince, whom he can neither blind nor frighten, for the unripe, unwise boy whom he might hope to deceive or crush. I have made bold to take my father's signet in case of need: so get your mantle around you, mother, and come with me. Ludmila has already suffered too much."

"Do you love Ludmila, Wenzel?"

"No further than knightly courtesy. But good old Count Otto has had foul wrong in the Emperor's mind by the contrivance of this false follower and the General, for their own purposes; and I should be loath to face him if he return to find his daughter spirited away,—why, how, and where, the Devil only could tell,—and his wealth in the hands of the Dominicans. But I have given Sir Henry a hint which will cure his plotting with monks, I think."

"You talk riddles——"

"And have no time to expound them. I can do that when your favorite is safe. Come, mother; for the Emperor would hardly forgive himself all that might happen betwixt this and morning."

"Thank Heaven, my son, your heart is better——"

"Than my manners? I hope so."

Trembling, wondering, yet full of zeal, the Empress suffered her son to lead her through labyrinthine ways hitherto unknown to her, first to the chapel of the castle, thence through a damp and dismal passage intended for escape into the forest, and, running below the street and along the inner side of the

city wall, an occasional aperture in which alone relieved the oppressive vapor.

"Your hand!" said the Prince, suddenly, as the cresset he carried displayed a grated door. The Empress's fair hands whose preternatural strength could twist a horse-shoe found something more of resistance in those bars of iron; but the sockets had been tampered with in advance, and yielded at last.

"The Devil must have the credit of this night's work," Wenceslaus explained, as they passed through the space effected. The next essay was on what seemed a blank wall, in which, however, the Prince soon revealed one of those mysterious doors that admitted the conscript fathers of Nuremberg to their refractory children. "Here," he said, as they entered, "begins our danger of discovery; for the mercy and justice of the Senators sometimes bring them at extraordinary hours to visit the sinners whom they piously devote to the Virgin, every Senator having a secret passage to this hellish grave."

Next a bright light streaming through a partially open door guided them into the central passage of the dungeons, where across the main entrance the keeper was stretched supine, in deep, drugged slumber. Elizabeth's courage was not equal to her strength: she clung to her son, who, with an assuring smile, hurried her from the glare of the betrayed janitor's torch through various windings, where soon a second flash increased her fears.

"Zdenko," the Prince now whispered, as a burly figure approached who might have learned disguises from the martyred Ozias. Hair and beard of rusty brown shaded his face; he surveyed his visitants with a confused stare, affected utter deafness to the few words the Prince uttered, but nodded understandingly at sight of the signet, and led the way into a large room furnished with those singular results of mechanical genius—frames of various devices, chains, wheels, ropes,

pulleys—deemed necessary to haul, stretch, or compress the political and religious opinions of the Emperor's lieges into the legitimate and theological compass,—the treasures of the Torture-Chamber,—over which Zdenko threw the light of his torch like a *virtuoso* doing the honors of his rare collection; but suddenly, detecting an approaching sound, he hurried his guests into a cell closely screened by disused machinery and disappeared. In another moment a measured step—the step of the Vicar-General—crossed the chamber. There was a short pause, during which the Empress fancied she could hear her heart beat, when the Dominican returned, but not alone.

“Look around you!” he said, not loudly, but with utterance as severe and distinct as that of destiny. “Do you understand these things?”

“I might suspect them to be hard lessons, my lord.”

“Could you endure to see such lessons taught?”

“If it be God's will!”

Here the hidden witnesses could see Zdenko deposit a human being on one of the frames so mysterious to the uninitiated, and withdraw;—saw Ludmila drop on her knees before it, sobbing out, “Father Cyrillus! his father, my father! and I cannot save you!”

“Better so, my child. In darkness and agony I have had visions which come not in the full light of life,—visions of my own sins and of Christ's loving mercy. Forgive me my blind cruelty to yourself, and I die contented.”

A paroxysm of tears and incoherent words replied; but the General, with an arm as iron as his will, raised his victim.

“We understand each other,” he addressed her: “*here* we need not affect to talk of creed or law. Shall he live, or feel the rack to-night, the flames to-morrow?”

Inhuman as were the words, his voice was so gentle that the hapless girl turned on him a pleading glance; but he only smiled down on this new beauty, hailing it as a favorable

omen, and Ludmila, shuddering visibly, fixed her eyes on the colossal statue of brass in the middle of the Torture-Chamber,—the figure of a woman—what fiendish irony so devised it?—and could as soon have found hope and words to have addressed that as the man beside her. She crossed herself silently, and leaned her aching forehead upon the cold robes of the Virgin of Nuremberg. The General left the room; and during his absence there was no sound but the monk's painful breathing and the young girl's gasping sobs. As he returned, the clank of chains bore a fit burden to his firm, deliberate steps, and Ludmila felt as if the clashing iron struck upon her heart; for she saw Albert heavily fettered, yet moving with the undaunted mien she had watched with such loving pride on the ramparts of Beuren, and the agonized wish to throw herself into his arms, hear him claim her as his own, and then die, taught her how far her native spirit had yielded. The glare of the torch held by the General, flashing back from the towering metallic shape beneath which she stood, revealed her pale and rigid as marble, with flowing tresses and arms instinctively outstretched, so phantom-like in beauty that her lover gazed with the same adoring awe as when she haunted him shrouded by the blue Bohemian mist. No word was spoken: it was significant enough that Father Ignatius touched the spring which threw wide the arms and opened the breast of the statue, disclosing the ghastly death within, and then lifted Ludmila aside—the victims of Circe not more magic-bound, more cold, more powerless. Yet the three fixed their thoughts on God, and, with faith purified to the enthusiasm of martyrdom, viewed the gleaming blades within the breast of the “accursed maiden” as opening glimpses of the heavenly world. The calm was broken by the General's whisper: “You will suffer him to live, Ludmila? Speak; be mine, and all these horrors shall vanish like a fevered dream.”

A sudden and powerful grasp threw the speaker apart

from his victim, who, with a sigh of utter exhaustion, fell unconscious into her husband's arms, and the guilty rivals confronted each other, Sir Henry's eyes blazing with the hot rage of a wild beast whose prey is threatened; those of the Vicar burning with the steady light of a strong yet disciplined will, accustomed to see every thing bend before it.

"Priest of hell!" burst forth the former, "you have deceived, insulted, mocked me!"

And the answer came with a sneer: "Who can escape his destiny? You were created for a tool,—for my tool!"

The speaker stood but a pace from the yawning gulf so insatiate of victims. A blow from his maddened antagonist sent him reeling into the very heart of the Virgin of Nuremberg,—that heart with whose terrors he had so tortured the insensible Ludmila. Swift as thought the machinery revolved; the colossal arms clasped this sacrifice of a new order, there arose the sound so familiar to that slaughter-house—the smothered yell of human fear, despair, and agony—then silence! A few drops of blood oozed slowly from the base of the statue, all that would ever be seen of the active, strong, unscrupulous monk who had swayed the religious, and through that the political, power of half Europe; while in the shambles below, gashed into irrerecognisable bits, lay all that wonder-working machine so late a man! The torch dropped from his hand lay flickering on the floor, and Sir Henry stood fixing a wild, sullen stare on the spot so suddenly left vacant. Ere he could recover himself to thought or motion, a thick mantle was thrown over his head, his arms seized from behind with a force that seemed supernatural, a gag thrust between his teeth, the pressure of hands replaced by shackles upon his wrists; and thus, blinded, speechless, amid a silence as fearful as his helplessness, he was led off, expecting death until released by the hand that guided him, when

the sound of bolts behind him assured him of a present reprieve.

Then the group in the Torture-Chamber seemed restored to natural life: Zdenko struck the fetters from his beloved kinsman, that he might press to his heart the still insensible beauty his chains had hindered him from enfolding: she revived to behold the Empress and Wenceslaus bending over her, to meet Albert's eyes, and then, bewildered, to close her own, wondering whether she were dead or dreaming.

Happily she asked no questions: to see her mistress was enough. But as soon as her thoughts were collected, she drew Albert towards Father Cyrillus, on whom Zdenko was lavishing his care, and carried the monk's wasted hand to her lips, while the son, his filial tenderness thus aroused, folded to his breast the poor, lacerated frame, as if resolute that he should revive in the young life and strength which was all his own. And thus the father lay on the broad chest that heaved with suppressed sobs, upon the heart which a fate so strange had parted from his own till that supreme hour, and for a minute of supernal happiness all was forgotten but his son, Marila's son: the last ray of earthly emotion beamed from his eyes on the noble face and form.

"Bless me too, my father," murmured Ludmila: "bless his wife, your daughter!" and for the first time she displayed on her finger the ring so long hidden on her breast. He smiled tenderly on the pale face, so chastened from the brilliant beauty he had first seen, conscious now of her love, her courage and devotion.

"How blind is man in his selfish folly!" he said, in weak and broken tones. "Our allotted trials are our chiefest blessings: it is but our mad strife against God's will that tightens the bonds of his wholesome discipline to agony. Ever merciful, he has blessed me in mine own despite. Let us thank him for the love that chasteneth."

Then, in a low voice, which swelled with the inspiration of the words as he proceeded, he recited, from the services for the dead, "I believe that my Redeemer liveth," &c., and continued to chant the 22d Psalm:—"The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall never want." A chill horror ran through the listeners as he thus devoted his yet living body ashes to ashes and dust to dust; but this was changed to religious fervor by the ecstasy of a redeemed soul looking with saintly joy across the valley of the shadow of death, and pointing them to the effulgence of God's light and love beyond, and the oppressed serf, the lowly friar, the soldier of the people, seemed transfigured by that light and love to angelic might. Elizabeth bent low her stately form, and the wild Prince looked on with tearful awe as Father Cyrillus paused, the ashy hue of death creeping over his face. Zdenko uttered a cry of distress; Albert, sick to faintness, dropped his head on his father's hand with a groan; but Ludmila, in woman's self-denying love, hushed these sounds of earthly grief which might disturb the serenity of the parting soul, and as the last faint breath subsided, whispered, amid her own fast-falling tears, "He is not here: he is risen!"

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The Emperor was mortal, although it had perhaps escaped his memory. Achilles may have forgotten his vulnerable tendon upon the fall of Troy, and Charles IV. his mortality after the political victories he had won, and the power he had secured, when he was summoned to that empire where the house of Luxembourg and the house of Lazarus are equal.

It was to Wenceslaüs, therefore, that the Prior of the Dominican monastery carried his alarms on the disappearance of the head of his order, and from Wenceslaus that he received the assurance that all life and all freedom should be safe under the laws of the German Empire. Yet no efforts of

church or state brought to light the dead secret of the "Virgin of Nuremberg."

To verify the hint dropped by the Prince, Sir Henry of Lichtenstein had entered the dungeons of the Senate by one of the many ways sacred to justice: he had been led out as mysteriously as he was captured; and when his hands were loosed, so that he could remove the bandage from his eyes, he stood alone in the chapel of the castle. He was little likely to reveal his own knowledge of that night's work.

In hurried consultation after Father Cyrillus' death, it was decided that the prisoners must remain, lest any change in the dungeon should excite suspicion.

During the days devoted to the funeral pomps, Ludmila glided almost unnoticed into the weeping Empress's rigid seclusion, while in a remote quarter of the castle Berethold's watch over the prostrate Baron of Rabenstein was shared by the young serf, too grateful that no ties save those of Christian duty bound him to the ghastly wreck smitten by the violence of his own passions and the recoil of his own sins, ever to weary in filial cares.

The pageantry of death was but over, when the boy-Emperor began to experience the weight of that "polished perturbation" he had inherited. Deputies from the free cities arrived to negotiate a truce needed by all classes:—Habenicht, the brave and skilful leader of the rebels of Ulm; a sharp-sighted, clear-headed old burgher, who, bred in a court or convent, would have made diplomacy his trade; and Sir Adolf of Weinsperg, whose knightly estate might serve to counteract the contempt with which the nobility, born to the privilege of destroying life, regarded those whose occupations tended only to preserve and embellish it. With them returned Count Otto, and for a while he and his child forgot every other care in each other's arms; but with reflection, Ludmila for the first time trembled at the thought of her

Father's prejudices and temper, and the past in which Albert and herself might have died together seemed less fearful than the future which might sever their strange, wild love. As usual, she turned to the Empress, who soothed her fears and pondered over the remedy. Therefore when Count Otto, informed of Zahera's sad plight, hastened to the couch of his old friend, the stately youth he found there was habited as became the future heir of Rabenstein, in right of letters expectative from the Emperor; nor did the powerful figure, the dark mustache and martial bearing confuse his memory of the handsome boyish face which had won his heart. He embraced Albert almost as eagerly as he had Ludmila, insisted on the whole story of the siege of Beuren, which, as the young man omitted his own part, was recited by Zdenko, when the Count swore that had he been Emperor he should have gloried in such subjects even as rebels. The good knight was human, and, though too generous to bear rancor to his deceased master, he yet felt Albert's triumph as a sort of retribution for Charles's refusal to liberate himself on the terms offered by the leaders at Ulm. So, without further thought, he seized the young man by the arm, hurried him, confused, agitated, wondering, yet afraid to speak, lest he might compromise Ludmila's plans, into her presence, and placed her, all amazed and trembling, in his arms.

"You see his heart is with us," commented Elizabeth when her favorite blushing described the scene.

"It will go hard, then, if we cannot turn his head," added Ludmila, with the arch smile so long unseen on her beautiful lips. And the old lord's purpose remained firm after hearing the story of Albert's birth.

"It was to this boy I promised you for the man I saw in him," he said, with earnestness; and his daughter heard submissively.

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On the evening of their arrival the deputies had private audience of the Emperor; and, to his dismay, Henry of Lichtenstein was summoned to the Imperial presence. He saw Wenceslaus's eyes red and angry; and when, turning from that, his own fell on a powerful figure in black armor, through the bars of whose helmet a piercing, steady gaze was fixed on himself, a mysterious awe seized on him, and the skeleton of the Dance of Death seemed to lower on him from that disguise. He felt that neither falsehood nor subterfuge would avail, while candor might serve instead of honor or honesty, and therefore replied fully to all the Emperor's questions.

"Enough!" exclaimed the latter, as the knight paused. "Leave Germany: leave Nuremberg: and leave ere thy misdeeds come to thy lord's hearing. Moreover, for thine own ear, recollect that the dungeons of the Senate are not so secret as hell, though they may be as hideous: so bear thyself accordingly."

The cowed felon withdrew: whatever he might have hoped by being freed from the toils of the General of the Dominicans, all was baffled by the death of Charles the Fourth and the return of the Count of Riesenbergh. Sullenly raging, he gathered together a few men as desperate as himself, and passed into the Italian States, where, with the same disloyal ambition and unscrupulous sharpness, he achieved the repute, not of the bravest, but of the most greedy and least trustworthy, leader of Free Lances.

"And now that we are satisfied of the fair Anna's parentage," resumed the Emperor after Sir Henry had retired, "the next point is, how are we to rescue her from Eberhard's hands? Were I to interfere openly, he is quite capable of going over to the cities of the league again. Will they refuse such an auxiliary for the sake of a woman?"

"I answer, my liege, that they will prefer a certain enemy to an uncertain friend; and that if he revolt from your Im-

perial Highness for this matter, we will fight on your side at whatever cost." Thus answered the diplomatic burgher.

"We will at once summon Count Eberhard. You, Sir Adolf, with your friends, await the issue in yonder cabinet."

The Count of Wurtemberg came, as ever, gallant in apparel, gay and graceful of carriage. As he knelt and kissed his Prince's hand with something more of devotion than usual in such formality, Wenceslaus held him a moment by his glance, then said, in his natural, careless way,—

"Good my lord, I can well guess it safer to be my father's son than his daughter, with such a gallant at my feet."

A smile of conscious power played on the Count's face.

Wenceslaus continued: "And, most noble grand huntsman, next to the blood royal, I should say that hunting the daughters of free citizens was the most dangerous of amusements."

Eberhard sprang to his feet flushed with anger and surprise. The young Emperor laughed. "Never rage about it, Count, but hear me out. Ulm, with other cities, offers a truce, on conditions not to be rejected. Your restoration of this citizen's daughter gives peace to the Empire."

The Count looked as if there were nothing more contemptible than the peace of the Empire. "And my refusal?" he asked, superbly.

"The Imperial exchequer is at too low an ebb to uphold you; and, before you decide, get some thriving citizen or sharp Jew to count the cost for you; for, on my royal word, if you risk a modern Iliad you will scarce find German princes so fraternal as to undertake to secure you, or any other Paris, in the possession of so expensive a luxury as the daughter of a free citizen."

"By your discourse, my liege, I gather that some one of these giants of spindle and shears has lost a *fraulein* of whose theft he accuses me. Who is this lost jewel? Let the owner come forward and describe her."

He paused, reminded by Wenceslaus's eye that he spoke to one not only bold and reckless as himself, but whose boldness and recklessness were armed with Imperial power; and as his glance shifted it fell upon a towering shape, clad in black mail save the helmet, the absence of which disclosed the massive yet noble features of Lewis the Austrian.

Eberhard crossed himself and turned pale, though he gazed firmly on this stern apparition; but, ere a word was spoken, the Empress entered through a private door, followed by a woman in mourning garments—Elizabeth of Esslingen, with face sad and wan, yet strong and true as ever in expression. Her eye traversed the group, lingered, and seemed to stiffen, as did the Count's, on the black knight. With a convulsive shriek, she sank to her knees and was caught up by the arms and strained to the breast of the statue, felt her brow wet with tears, heard the voice so long thought to have been chained by death, and gained courage to lift her eyes to the face for which she had so long strained her mental vision into the heavenly future.

There was a minute of overpowering emotion. Then the iron grasp relaxed, the moistened eyes resumed their calm and earnest gaze, and the citizen-soldier led his wife to the Emperor's chair and knelt with her in silent homage. Next, rising, they turned to the Count of Wurtemberg, who stood motionless, more awe-stricken by this strange scene than he would have owned. Shivering from head to foot, Elizabeth fixed on him a look that had in it no entreaty, no hope—a look of such blank despair that Eberhard, who, with all the faults of his rank and times, could not boast that his heart was entirely bronze, actually quailed before it.

"My liege," he said, "grant me now your gracious permission to withdraw, that I may prepare to confer to-morrow with your Imperial Highness on the matters you have broached to-night."

Wenceslaus assented; and the Count, with a low reverence, retired.

"A most timely apparition, Sir Habenicht," the Emperor then addressed Lewis. "We must now wait with patience for the meditations it may produce, aided by our own gentle hints."

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The recital of Lewis's adventures to his wife necessarily involved the confession of Henry of Lichtenstein, to the effect that, being informed of the defeat of the citizens, the escape of Lewis, and the views of the Governor of Suabia, he had, on first suspecting that he had fallen on traces of the former while journeying himself to Bohemia with Count Otto, resolved to gain Eberhard's favor and confidence by removing so troublesome an antagonist; that, to avert inquiry, he had used the symbols of the Free Judges, trusting that from a country where their jurisdiction was not legally acknowledged no revelation would reach their tribunal; that he had finally discovered the daughter of Lewis, and acknowledged that she was now, through a feigned marriage, under the protection of the Count of Wurtemberg.

Having so wonderfully escaped death by the discretion and skill of Father Cyrillus, Lewis had permitted himself to be supposed dead, providing for his wife and child through Ozias; and the strict disguise he had maintained during the late struggle between despotism and liberty had served to impress both friends and foes with a faith in his powers for war and council which in his own character he could not have commanded.

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A few days later, the deputies were received in state, and a truce concluded, by which the Princes of the Empire, including Eberhard the Riotous, at the head of three orders of *knights* and thirty-four free and Imperial cities, agreed to

make common cause against the enemies of each and all for the space of one year.

The same day Albert was proclaimed successor to the fief of Rabenstein in default of heirs thereof, with the exercise of all its rights, titles, and immunities during the incapacity of the present Baron, and was then solemnly knighted by the Emperor, Count Otto and Sir Adolf of Weinsperg acting as sponsors.

The influence of Anna's stately beauty on Count Eberhard's fancy, her gentle, trusting, and unambitious love, had extended to his heart, and finally to his conscience. The impossibility of warring against the league, the certainty of Lewis's immense wealth and his rank and influence among the citizens, aided in deciding him. After the state-ceremonies of the day were ended, the Emperor and Empress, Anna's parents, Count Otto, Ludmila, and Albert, with Sir Adolf and the citizen-deputy, witnessed the marriage of the left hand of this haughtiest of nobles with the daughter of the people.

An hour or two later, the whole Court was assembled in the chapel of the castle, where, with hearts glowing with new thanksgivings to God and new gratitude to their Imperial protectors, the Lady Ludmila of Riesenbergr and Baron Albert of Rabenstein repeated the vows first exchanged in mystery and danger. Their love was of the Golden Age; and when Albert touched the lips of the vision that had so bewildered him, her eyes, her blush, her smile, all assured him that she would never more vanish from his arms in mist or moonlight. But it was not until they roamed together through the scenes of their first love that Ludmila gathered courage to tell the whole story of the Haunted Student.

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After the birth of an heir of Riesenbergr and Rabenstein, Count Otto the Stormy became a mere tradition, only recalled when it was feared that his submission to the new

Baron might result in that potentate's assumption of the mantle of clouds dropped by his grandsire : but other tutors, Berthold, Zdenko, and Eblis, averted that danger, each after his own fashion of instruction.

Lewis and Elizabeth, too grateful for the evils avoided to murmur over the blessing denied of retaining their daughter in their own sphere, found comfort in laboring zealously,—he for the cause of religious and political freedom, she in good works among the hungry, the sick and sorrowing.

Anna never knew the perils from which she had been rescued—imputing the public solemnization of her marriage to the Emperor's wish to propitiate the citizens by presiding over the bridal of one of their own class, and to Count Eberhard's courtesy to her father. She could not always be ignorant of the fate of their Hebrew friend ; and though her thoughts were never uttered, their effect was seen in the consideration her children were taught towards his despised and suffering race.

Nor did Ludmila forget either the devoted Israelite, or the enthusiast and lifelong martyr Conrad : happier than her friend in the freedom of a more perfect marriage, she could unite with Albert in welcoming the oppressed, the persecuted and outcast for conscience' sake, to the peace and safety of the Rabenstein and to the liberty wherewith Christ made all men free.

THE END.

